Yan Guo *Editor*

Home-School Relations

International Perspectives

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Chapter 1
Home-School Relations: An Introduction

Yan Guo and Xueqin Wu

This book examines new directions on parent-teacher relationships from immigrant, minority, and international perspectives. It is timely and important because the extant literature tends to focus on traditional models of parent involvement that overlook the contributions of immigrant and minority parents as well as international perspectives. Moreover, the current literature focuses on home-school relations in North America and Europe. Little is known about family-school relations in Asia, Australia, and South America. This book makes a contribution by bringing together scholars who explore home-school relations in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Mexico, Mongolia, South Korea, Sweden, and the USA. The book chapters provide windows to unique settings and contexts that reveal similarities and differences and as well enable comparisons to be drawn about parent engagement across the globe.

Reconceptualizing Parent Involvement

Traditional North American models of family-school partnership include six types of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 2001). Parenting helps all families establish home environments to support children's learning, including making suggestions for home conditions and offering workshops on parenting and child rearing. Communicating focuses on clear information on all school policies and programs and communication about student progress through report cards and parent-teacher conferences. Parents are expected to initiate parent-teacher meetings if they have any particular concerns. They are also expected to volunteer at school functions such as chaperoning field trips and supervising in the lunchroom. Schools often provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities. Teachers and administrators expect parents to participate in parent councils or committees in school decision-

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making processes. Collaborating with community involves integrating community resources and services to strengthen school programs and student learning. Epstein's types of involvement are the predominant models for defining parent involvement (2001). There are other differing definitions of parent involvement in the literature. For instance, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) define parent involvement as their provision of resources to the academic area of children's lives.

Reflecting on my childhood experience, I (the editor) started to question these typical types of parent involvement (Epstein, 2001). When I was little, my grandmother told me many stories in China. Those stories came from Chinese fairy tales, popular operas, and classical literature. My grandmother was a great storyteller. When I learned how to read, I realized many of the stories I read in school sounded familiar. My grandmother told me these stories before I went to school. My grandmother never went to school herself. She did not read to me because she could not read herself. She did not go to parent-teacher meetings because she trusted that my teachers were responsible for my education. She did not volunteer in school due to her diffidence about her own capacity, not to mention participating in decision-making at the school level. Was she involved in my education? According to the six types of parent involvement discussed above, she was not involved in my education. From my perspective, however, my grandmother was actively engaged in my education. She supported my education in her storytelling.

Parent involvement in education has been socially constructed to privilege white, middle-class over those from non-English-speaking backgrounds or of Aboriginal descent in North America (Auerbach, 2007; Guo, 2006; Lareau, 2003). The conventional model for parent involvement in education involves forms of participation in school-based activities and events. This model intends to promote equal opportunity, but in practice has many failings (Dehli, 1994; Mclaren & Dyck, 2004). As López (2001) notes, "parent involvement has become a privileged domain signified by certain legitimate acts" (p. 417), such as helping with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, and participating in fundraising activities. Workshops on parenting, child rearing, family literacy, and volunteering often promote the normative expectations of immigrants' conformity to white, middle-class parent involvement. In these works, "consensus and cooperation are assumed; parent involvement is treated as a social fact on neutral terrain rather than as a socially constructed phenomenon on the contested terrain of schooling" (Auerbach, 2007, p. 251). This alleged neutrality and universality fail to acknowledge the unique ways that immigrant parents engage in their children's education and broader social inequalities in which immigrant home-school relations are embedded. The unequal distribution of economic, human, cultural, and social capital in addition to schools' devaluing of immigrant parent knowledge constrains parents' relations with schools (Auerbach, 2007; Bourdieu, 1986). In Canadian schools, the dominant discourse of immigrant parents is framed as the problematic "Others". Immigrant parents are perceived as people who speak "broken" English, who are less intelligent, who do not participate in parent-teacher conferences, who do not volunteer in schools, and who cannot contribute to their children's education. When immigrant parents do not meet normative

standards, schooling ends up undermining and subordinating the parents' practices (Bernhard, Freire, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Villanueva, 1998).

There are, however, unique ways in which immigrant parents are involved in their children's education. For example, one Chinese parent reported that she sat down with her children when they did their homework to affirm the value she placed on their education, even though she could not help them with their homework (Guo, 2006). This example demonstrates that even though this parent may not be able to show up at the school for school activities, sitting with her children when they were doing their homework signals she cares about her children's education. This example also shows that even though this type of activity is not recognized by teachers as typical parent involvement, it is a unique way for this Chinese immigrant parent to help her children's education. Immigrant parents in López's (2001) study took their children to work with them in the fields and taught them to appreciate the value of their education, thus transmitting appropriate sociocultural values as a type of parent involvement. Thus, an effective model of parental involvement would need: (a) to recognize a full range of socio-educational norms, values, and cultural knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of immigrant parents in their children's education; and (b) to be established on a thorough understanding of how knowledge is constructed and mobilized.

Furthermore, Guo (2012) interviewed thirty-eight parents who arrived in Canada from fifteen countries. In the Canadian system of education, teachers typically expect parents to participate in school events and show concern for their children's educational success (Epstein, 2001). Guo's (2012) study suggests that even though immigrant parents did not volunteer at school functions or attend school council meetings, they supported their children's learning at home in the form of passing on cultural and linguistic knowledge. The transmission of cultural and linguistic knowledge has rarely been documented in the literature as a type of parent involvement (see López for an exception). Guo's (2012) research suggests that the immigrant parents saw transmitting their first-language knowledge, negotiating the terrain of both home and school cultures, and helping their children combat various forms of racism as important forms of involvement in their children's education. These unique forms of parent involvement expand narrow conceptions of parent-school relations that tend to reinforce and serve the interests of white, middle-class families. This significant expansion to parent involvement has important implications for Canadian schools and education practitioners.

In this book, I (the editor) intentionally left it open for the chapter contributors to use their own definitions of parent involvement. In this way, readers of this book will be exposed to different perspectives of parent involvement. The editor prefers parent engagement to parent involvement. Although this is what I ascribe, others in the book differ in the terms used. In parent involvement, parents often play passive roles such as "audience, spectators, fundraisers, aides, and organizers" (McGlip & Michael, 1994, p. 2). These traditional roles are considered uni-directional in that parents are called upon to participate in school-based activities and events.

Parent engagement, however, requires reconceptualizing traditional notions of parent involvement. Shirley (1997) describes that "parent engagement designates

parents as citizens in the fullest sense-change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods" (p. 73). Pushor (2007, p. 3) defines parent engagement as school spaces where:

> 'parent knowledge' and teacher knowledge both inform decision-making, the determination of agendas, and the intended outcomes of their efforts for children, families, the community, and the school.

Different from parent involvement, parent engagement values immigrant parents as important constructors of knowledge about children, teaching, and learning. According to Pushor (2010), "parent engagement recognize that much of what parent do to support their children's education may not be visible to educators" (p. 9). For example, most parents in Guo's (2012) study reported that their children's schools often ignored their children's previous language knowledge. Parents thus informally taught their first languages to their children at home. The parents provided a number of reasons for passing on their linguistic values to their children. For some, teaching and preserving the first language at home was an important means of staying connected to relationships, cultural values, and identities forged in their home countries. In this case, passing on their first-language knowledge to the children was a unique form of parent engagement. It is significant for teachers and school administrators to recognize and make use of immigrant parent knowledge, cultural, first language, and religious knowledge. Such recognition requires teachers and school administrators to unlearn their privilege (Andreotti, 2007) and learn to learn from immigrant parents in order to provide a better public education for immigrant students.

This book challenges the deficit perspectives on immigrant and minority parents' engagement in their children's education, covering a wide range of critical perspectives from an international lens. This volume is organized into four sections: Part I focuses on theorizing parent engagement and policy analysis. Part II examines minority and immigrant parent engagement. Part III explores parent-teacher relationships in international contexts. The volume ends with Part IV which analyses home-school relationships in teacher education.

Thoerizing Parent Engagement and Policy Analysis

This Section focuses on theorizing parent engagement and policy analysis. In Chap. 2, Guo from Canada critiques the deficit model of immigrant parents' engagement at Canadian schools. Through the analysis of in-depth interviews with thirty-eight immigrant parents from fifteen countries, Guo points out that immigrant parents are important constructors of knowledge about children, teaching, and learning. Therefore, it is significant that teachers and school administrators recognize and make use of parent knowledge on culture, first language and religion in order to provide a better public education for immigrant students. The research reveals three new types of parent engagement: (a) the transmission of cultural and linguistic values, (b) negotiating the terrain of both home and school cultures, and (c) helping their children

combat various forms of racism. These unique forms of parent engagement expand traditional conceptions of parent-school relations that tend to reinforce and serve the interests of white, middle-class families. The point about the dearth of literature on the transmission of cultural and linguistic values as a form of parent involvement is a valuable contribution to the field of parent engagement. The theoretical and practical implications are well framed and well worked in the final section to powerfully conclude the chapter.

In Chap. 3, Evans from the USA, using critical discourse analysis, examines one common parent involvement policy, the requirement for a school-family compact in Title I schools in the USA. The chapter explores how the discourses in these documents contribute to the framing of family, school, and community partnerships and how the role of power is addressed within the compacts. Findings indicate that upon implementation Title I compacts primarily reinforce hierarchical models of parent involvement and emphasizes transactional encounters, such as volunteerism and homework assistance, over, and above partnership activity that may run counter to original policy objectives. In other words, Title I compacts largely reinforce school-centric parent involvement models and may serve to further marginalize low-income families. In relations to families and students, the language in the compacts depicts teachers as the more powerful actors. The chapter highlights parents' lack of agency as well as the absence of student's voice when it comes to decision-making in schools about curriculum and learning in their different contexts. The chapter concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educators to engage in more meaningful and authentic dialogues with families regarding potential best practices for policy implementation efforts.

Minority and Immigrant Parent Engagement

This Section focuses on minority and immigrant parent engagement in different contexts. In Chap. 4, Ippolito from Canada reports on a university/school board collaborative outreach program hosted by a linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse elementary school in Toronto, Canada. The program facilitates a forum where the school's families discuss issues they deem important to their experience of public schooling with in-service and pre-service teachers, the school's administration, a local university's Faculty of Education and community agencies. About 15 to 20 parents typically attend each session and information sheets related to discussion topics are distributed in English and minority languages. Ippolito draws upon immigrant parents as peer-researchers to interview other parents for their feedback about the program. Analysis of the parent surveys and interviews reveals that the program empowers parents and caregivers and brings them closer to their children's schooling. Ippolito also points out the broader social and interpersonal dynamics at play between and among parents, which the program must be prepared to take up and discuss. The chapter makes an excellent contribution in relation to minority, immigrant, and disadvantaged groups of parents and students.

Chapter 5 shifts out attention to a multiethnic suburb in Stockholm, Sweden. Dahlstedt, drawing from Foucault's governmentality, explores how public sector officials and school staff there understand collaboration between schools and parents. In-depth interviews with public officials, school principals, and teachers reveal that the notion of "linguistic and cultural deficits" of immigrant parents remain quite normalized among the participants. The immigrant parents are considered being incapable of making a contribution to the children's schoolwork due to their lack of sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language, culture and the school system. In the meantime, Dahlstedt points out the multifaceted nature of the issue and the importance of promoting all parents' languages and culture as resources rather than problems. Dahlstedt's chapter from Europe further highlights the common problems experienced in the parent engagement space across the world.

Finally, in Chap. 6, Zhou and Zhong from Canada examine Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's school-based education and the factors that shape the formats of their involvement in Ontario, Canada. Interviews with twelve Chinese immigrant couples reveal that language barrier, lack of time and energy, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school culture were reported as the main factors that hindered participants' involvement in school-based activities. Despite these obstacles, these Chinese immigrant parents participated in school-based activities such as parent-teacher conferences, volunteering on fieldtrips, fundraising, attending their children's school performances, and serving on parent councils regardless of personal experiences. Chapter 6 contributes to deepening understanding about the experience of parent involvement from the perspective of immigrant parents. It highlights the value they place on education yet the challenges they themselves experience in finding work, despite suitable high-level educational qualifications from their birth country, and the consequences this has for their children. This chapter reveals the complex nature of parent involvement that goes beyond simplistic ideas of parents not wanting to be involved.

Parent-Teacher Relationships in International Contexts

This Section presents research on parent-teacher relationships in various countries and regions such as China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and the USA. In Chap. 7, Guo, Wu and Liu explore the changes in Chinese parent-teacher relationships under China's market economy. Individual interviews with twenty-one teachers and twenty parents in eight cities in China reveal that modern technology such as the Internet and WeChat facilitates faster and more diverse communication between parents and teachers. Meanwhile, the market economy impacts some parents to devalue education and contributes to a pragmatic attitude towards teachers. In addition, market economy has brought new challenges to parent-teacher relationship as young and educated parents seem to have their own opinions about their children's education and personal growth, differing from those of teachers, and are more likely to challenge teachers' authority than in the past. The chapter makes an original contribution

to the field by challenging stereotyping assumptions towards Chinese parents who are not involved or only involved in their children's education at home. The chapter shows that contemporary Chinese parents are actively engaged in their children's education at home and in school. It highlights some of the creative ways technology in China is being used to enable meaningful communication and learning between parents and teachers. At the same time, it shows how China's market economy is widening gaps between families, especially those able to pay for tuition of their children and those unable to afford it. These rare insights highlight current and emerging dangers to parent-teacher engagement with relevance beyond China.

In Chap. 8, Yuen investigates home-school collaboration in multicultural early year education in Hong Kong. Grounded in empirical evidence, Yuen reports findings of a needs analysis on intercultural teacher professional development and discusses the impediments in place towards engaging South Asian ethnic minority and Chinese cross-boundary (from Mainland China to Hong Kong) parents in their children's learning. Finally, she explores how intercultural teacher education and home-school collaboration can address the perceived issues and improve the situation. This chapter reiterates the issue of language as a serious barrier to parent engagement. The chapter also shines a spotlight on initial teacher education and its importance for preparing to engage parents in schools; so too, the value of ongoing professional development for practising teachers. Yuen makes an excellent point that the approach to parent engagement needs to be a whole school approach to avoid piecemeal or isolated approaches. Including para-professionals such as teacher aides and the role they can play in overcoming issues of culture and language is another important point to come from this chapter. The role teachers can play as change agents in the parent engagement space would be encouraging and motivational for readers.

In Chap. 9, Gu from Hong Kong examines the interaction between family socialization and parenting styles of three immigrant south Asian families and how such interaction influences the identity construction of second-generation adolescents in Hong Kong. The three families are typical transnational families with relatively low socio-economic status. Based on the interviews with three dyads (one parent and one child) respectively from Pakistan, India, and Nepal, the study reveals that these families are found to travel between past, present, and future and are faced with intricate contradictions between ideology and practice. Gu contends that different transnational families may differ significantly in their experiences, family language policies, parenting styles, and inter-generational interaction patterns and/or conflicts, which have implications for social policies and professional practices regarding immigrant/transnational families. The finding about a transnational identity is valuable for pointing the way to future research in the field.

Chapter 10 makes a useful contribution to the volume because of its exploration of the topic of school councils and how these may enable parent engagement in South Korea. It offers a glimpse at partnership policy in action in the context of historical, economic, and social changes. In this chapter, Kim offers an in-depth discussion on the educational reforms in South Korea, the background and development of the school council, as well as the possibilities and limitations of the school council. Kim reports that the school council was introduced by the South Korean government to

recognize and promote parent-school partnerships. The reform focused on a bottom up decision-making procedure, encompassing stakeholders that included teachers, parents, and community leaders. While acknowledging the positive role that the school council has played in promoting partnerships between family and school, the author points out challenges such as the lack of representativeness and expertise of the parent council members, and the power struggles and conflicts in the process of school council management.

Lastly, in Chap. 11, Jones from the USA reports on findings from a research on parent involvement in schools in the State of Sonora in Mexico which borders the State of Arizona in the USA. In this chapter, Jones examines parent involvement during the peak of immigration to the USA in 2008–09 as well as the subsequent return migration to Mexico in 2010 and 2013. The findings reveal that parent involvement in Sonora can be characterized as supportive of schools but deferential to educators. That is, the parents' role was to support teachers and schools by making sure their children attended school, completed homework, behaved respectfully to educators, and made contributions to financial needs of neighbourhood schools. However, the influx of families returning to Mexico after the economic recession of 2008–2009 has created new demands on teachers and administrators in Sonora in terms of administrative support, language support, identity development, and emotional support. Jones finally advocates for more research on the role of parents in the transnational integration of students into new schools and educational systems. The chapter shows how a lack of perceived identity can play out for immigrant children and the consequences for them and parent engagement. The chapter highlights the importance for teachers of understanding the uniqueness of the contexts in which they teach and the parents' aspirations and goals for their children and the impact this can have on teachers' work in the classroom.

Home-School Relationships in Teacher Education

Pre-service teacher education and parent engagement are an under-researched area. The last section of the book is devoted to the discussion of home-school relationships in teacher education. In Chap. 12, Willis from Australia examines how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing between the parents of two students and a teacher at a low socio-educational advantaged secondary school in Australia created inter-relational spaces beyond those traditionally available for engaging a pre-service teacher. Building on Pushor's notion of parent engagement and Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital, the chapter analyses how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing created a culture of dialogic exchange. This ongoing exchange saw the parents' and pre-service teacher's capital assume new value, enabling their knowledge, ideas and dispositions to meld with the teacher's as they collaborated to teach a class of students which included each of the parent's sons. The findings shine light on the positive unexpected ways the pre-service teacher learnt about parent-teacher engagement through coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing with the parents and teacher. The

findings also signal the benefits and challenges of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing for better preparing pre-service teachers for their future work with parents especially in low socio-educational advantaged schools.

In Chap. 13, Sukhbaatar investigates how a teacher education program at one of the three national primary education teacher education institutions in Mongolia prepares teachers for parent involvement. The study reveals that there was a lack of teacher preparation for parent involvement in the current teacher education program. The study also indicates that there were many barriers to parent involvement and teachers' overall lack of skills in developing parent involvement in schools. The supervising classroom teachers played a key role in shaping pre-service teachers' skills and attitudes. Different experiences among classroom teachers and schools had a large impact on pre-service teachers' professional judgements related to parent involvement. In addition to teachers' lack of skills in implementing parent involvement activities, some institutional and social factors such as heavy workloads, a limited understanding of family diversity, gender issues, and low social status of the teaching profession also contributed to a lack of parent involvement. The inclusion of a perspective of the phenomenon of parent involvement from Mongolia is eye opening.

In Chap. 14, Kim and Lee then explore early childhood pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership, especially for the interaction effect between motivation and teaching beliefs on the parent-teacher partnership among South Korean early childhood pre-service teachers. Data were collected from a teacher beliefs survey among 265 pre-service teachers in two different types of childhood teacher education programs (early childhood education and elementary education) in Seoul, Kyunggi, and Busan in South Korea. The results from *t*-tests and ANOVA showed that pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership were differentiated by student status in the teacher education program with discrete differences depending on subfactors. Constructivist teaching beliefs were the most significant variable to predict the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership. Even though there were no statistically meaningful interaction effects between intrinsic motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs, two-way interaction plots implied interaction effects between these two predictors. Analysis of the data shed light on curriculum development and educational policy for future endeavours to enhance teacher education quality and educational effectiveness. The chapter makes an original contribution to the field of parent engagement by linking constructivist approaches to ways to bridge the traditional theory-practice divides between university and school classrooms during pre-service teacher education programs. The findings presented in this chapter have the potential to change the outcomes of pre-service teacher programs by showing how perceptions of pre-service teachers can change over the course of a program.

In Chap. 15, Shin and Robertson shift our attention to Saskatoon, Canada, and focus on ways to support pre-service teachers to better engage immigrant and minority parents using a critical pedagogical approach in teacher education. They present a university course project conducted by a group of pre-service teachers who explored a participatory approach in English as an additional language (EAL) education to sup-

port EAL students and their families. Through a critical reflection on their experience working with a group of Korean mothers and analysis of participants' photovoice and reflective writing assignments, the authors make recommendations on how to cultivate the development and practice of critical and culturally responsive pedagogies in pre-service teachers to ensure parental engagement being an integral part of their educational practice. Using fresh and new methods, this chapter shows a specific example of pre-service teacher-parent engagement.

In Chap. 16, Reali and Tancredi conclude this section with a research project on the development of a constructive-collaborative university-school partnership in Brazil. This partnership focuses on strengthening school-family relations to promote teacher professional development in public elementary schools in low-income communities in a medium-sized city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The research and the intervention model aimed at: learning about the reality in which teachers work, identifying what they think about students and their families, understanding school-family interactions, and why teachers do what they do. The researchers and teachers then constructed strategies to promote school-family relations. The research showed that the teachers in the study underestimated the parents' investment in educational issues, particularly their ability to understand what was taught at school. Reali and Tancredi observed broad parental support for initiatives carried out by the school which in turn generated great enthusiasm among the teachers, resulting in the continuation, improvement, and expansion of successful practices and programs after the conclusion of the intervention research. The authors also pointed out the difficulties in building school-family connections and in the teachers' professional development such as teachers' need to deal with urgencies at school, frequent changes in some local educational policies, and the implementation of new objectives in the schools and in the school district policy.

This section on educating per-service teachers on parent engagement across different contexts is invaluable, as the field has paid much attention to in-service teachers' practices with parents. The ways to prepare teachers in different programs in different international contexts will provide valuable examples for others who wish to pursue this work.

Parent engagement is increasingly becoming an area of intense focus for politicians, public policymakers, schools/school leaders, teachers, higher education providers/pre-service teachers worldwide. This book offers fresh insights about the nature of the phenomenon and the complexities and challenges involved in different contexts yet, the similarities of problems encountered are telling. Given the multicultural nature of communities across the world, this book will have high appeal to school leaders and of use by higher education providers with pre-service teachers and teachers undertaking postgraduate studies, pre-service and in-service teachers, parents, researchers, graduate students, community organizations, and policymakers who are interested in parent engagement.

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Part I
Theorizing Parent Engagement and Policy Analysis

Chapter 2
Recognition of Immigrant and Minority Parent Knowledge

Yan Guo

Abstract Immigrant parents bring their values, language, culture, religion, and educational backgrounds to our schools, enriching our educational environments. The literature on immigrant parents, however, uses a deficit model. This chapter explores the value of and knowledge of immigrant parents on the margins of the public education system. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with thirty-eight immigrant parents from fifteen countries. The results of this study illustrate the significance of immigrant parent knowledge, cultural, first language and religious knowledge, and the need for teachers and school administrators to recognize and make use of parent knowledge.

Keywords Immigrant parent knowledge · Cultural knowledge · First language knowledge · Religious diversity · Parent engagement

Introduction

According to the 2016 Census, almost 7,749,115 people, that is, about 7 in 10 people in Canada, speak languages other than English or French as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2017). Calgary is the largest recipient of immigrants and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) students in Alberta, and the fourth largest such urban area in Canada, after Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Moreover, the long-term prospect for this population is continued growth (Statistics Canada, 2005). About 25% of the student population at the Calgary Board of Education were identified as

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ESL students in 2017. This demographic change has very serious implications for Canadian school systems.

Immigrant parents bring their values, language, culture, religion, and educational backgrounds to our schools enriching our educational environments. The literature on immigrant parents, however, uses a deficit model, highlighting parents' inability to speak English and their difficulties in communicating with schools (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Gibson, 2000). In opposition to the dominant discourse of immigrant parents as the problematic "Others" in Canadian schools, this study explores the value of and knowledge of immigrant parents on the margins of the public education system to help build a greater awareness of knowledge of culture, language, and religion for both parents and teachers.

Theoretical Frameworks and Prior Research

Fear of Diversity and Difference as Deficit

Over the years, research has repeatedly revealed that many teachers are not well prepared to work effectively with immigrant parents (Malatest & Associates, 2003; Turner, 2007). In their daily encounters with cultural diversity, many teachers still confront many challenges. One of the challenges is the fear of diversity (Palmer, 1998), the fear of Muslims, particularly after the September 11th event (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005), partially resulting from a lack of knowledge and readiness to approach cultural and religious diversity. The current curriculum and teaching practice in K-12 education, characterized by Eurocentric perspectives, standards, and values, do not reflect the knowledge and experiences of our culturally and religiously diverse student and parent population. Another challenge is the difference as deficit perspective (Dei, 1996). Rather than seeing difference and diversity as an opportunity to enhance learning by using the diverse strengths, experiences, knowledge, perspectives of students and parents from various cultural groups, the difference as deficit model sees diversity ignored, minimized, or as an obstacle to the learning process (Cummins, 2003; Dei, 1996). For example, the unique way that immigrant parents engage in their children's education is often ignored by teachers and school administrators (Jones, 2003; Ramirez, 2003).

Rethinking Immigrant Parent Involvement

The conventional North American model for parental involvement in education involves forms of parent participation in school-based activities and events. This model intends to promote equal opportunity, but in practice has many failings (Dehli, 1994; Guo, 2006; McLaren & Dyck, 2004). Barriers such as class and race play a role

in parent–school interaction. These include educators' cultural biases and generally low expectations of immigrant parents (Jones, 2003; Ramirez, 2003). As Cline and Necochea (2001, p. 23) observed of the involvement of Latino parents in the Lampoc United School District in California:

> only parental involvement that is supportive of school policies and instructional practices are welcome here … parents whose culture, ethnicity, SES, and language background differ drastically from the white middle-class norms are usually kept at a distance, for their views, values, and behaviors seem 'foreign' and strange to traditional school personnel.

Probing further, Lareau (2003) found that middle-class white and black parents were more strategic in intervening in their children's schools than were black working-class parents. Lareau also found that both middle- and working-class black parents were continually concerned with schools' racial discrimination. Perceived racial discrimination may have been a form of acquiescence among parents who were not strategic. In this regard, it is worth noting that North American models of parent involvement have tended to focus more on middle-class than working-class values and concerns and on experiences more relevant to parents of Anglo-Celtic descent than to those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. When immigrant parents do not conform to the dominant culture in their receiving country, schooling may end up undermining and subordinating parents' educative and child-rearing practices (Bernhard, Freire, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Villanueva, 1998).

Immigrant Parent Knowledge

The knowledge that immigrants hold about their children is often unrecognized by teachers and school administrators (Jones, 2003). These forms of non-recognition of immigrant parents can be attributed to misconceptions of difference and lack of knowledge about different cultures (Guo, 2009; Honneth, 1995). A deficit model of difference leads to the belief that difference is equal to deficiency and that the knowledge of others, particularly those from developing countries, is incompatible, inferior, and hence invalid (Abdi, 2007; Dei, 1996). If school staff members hold these attitudes, even tacitly, they may fail to recognize and make use of the knowledge of immigrant parents.

The extent to which parent knowledge is gained and used may be modeled as "transcultural knowledge construction," whereby individuals in immigrant societies of the new world change themselves by integrating diverse cultural lifeways into dynamic new ones. The resulting blended forms lead either to opposition and discrimination or to cultural creativity and the integration of new knowledge within academic and societal positionings (Hoerder, Hébert, & Schmitt, 2006). For example, in her study of Chinese immigrants in Toronto, Liu (2007) reported Chinese parents adapted to the Canadian way of educating children by integrating new knowledge gained from interactions with Canadian schools.

Knowledge is power; knowledge is socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated (McLaren, 2003). At the heart of the nature of knowledge as social relations is a notion of culture as a dynamic entity, as a way of using social, cultural, physical, spiritual, economic, and symbolic resources to make one's way in the world. Mobilizing such knowledge systematically in the classroom by teachers and administrators would promote insightful connections between curricular goals and immigrant students' experiences in countries of origin, in transition, and in residence in the local community, in turn making sense of transcultural flows and attachments to locality (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1992).

In addition to socially mediated forms of knowledge, immigrant parents' personal knowledge can play an important role in school relations. Personal knowledge refers to wisdom that comes with embodied meaning (Polanyi, 1958). Parent personal knowledge is knowledge gained from lived experience in all aspects of life at work, at play, with family and friends, and so on. It has temporal dimensions in that it resides in "the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). Parent knowledge includes that drawn from their own educational backgrounds, their professional and personal experiences of interacting with schools in their countries of origin as well as their current understanding of the host country's education system, their own struggles as immigrant parents, and their future aspirations for their children (Pushor, 2008).

Therefore, it is important to address issues such as who counts as knower, what knowledge counts, and how knower and knowledge interact in contexts (Hébert, Guo, & Pellerin, 2008). Such notions frame this study theoretically and epistemologically. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What is parent knowledge regarding their ESL children's learning?
2. How do parents mobilize such knowledge to advocate for their children at school?

Methodology

Thirty-eight parents were recruited through a community coalition in Calgary, Alberta. This is a local umbrella organization of community agencies, groups, and individuals, concerned with the current state of ESL instruction in the K-12 public education system and its consequences for immigrant children and families. The coalition is committed to work with community, education, and government stakeholders to promote access to quality, equitable education for culturally diverse children and youth.

The parents who participated in this study had recently arrived in Calgary from fifteen countries including China, Korea, Vietnam, Nepal, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Ghana, Somalia, Sudan, Columbia, Belize, and Suriname.

They spoke twenty-three different languages. All participants held credentials from their countries of origin. Twenty-five of these parents had bachelor's degrees, twelve had master's degrees, and one had a high school diploma. Occupations held in countries of origin included university instructors, teachers, engineers, social workers, principals, and managers. Once in Canada, most experienced downward mobility; they became community liaison workers, cashiers, production workers, or unemployed. Some parents volunteered in Canadian schools, participated in school councils, or worked in schools as lunch supervisors or teacher assistants. Some had observed teachers working with their children in Canada and were able to share these experiences.

Semi-structured, individual interviews with parents were used to elicit their perspectives on what teachers should know about their children. Several open-ended questions were used. These questions were designed to draw out rich descriptive data on parents' experiences with their children's teachers and schools, and their suggestions about what teachers need to know about their children, their community, culture, values, in order to develop more effective home/school partnerships. Great care was taken in these interviews to inquire into how parents' knowledge of Canadian education was acquired, constructed, and activated. Each interview lasted from sixty to ninety minutes.

An inductive analysis strategy was applied to the interview data throughout the study as the data were collected and processed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). This was accomplished by searching for domains that emerged from the data rather than imposing categories developed prior to data collection. Domains are large cultural categories that contain smaller categories/subcategories and whose relationships are linked by a semantic relationship (Spradley, 1980). Demographic information such as gender, level of education, and cultural background was also used to examine the emerging categories/domains. All findings were further analyzed in terms of different kinds of parent knowledge.

Findings

Three types of parent knowledge emerged from data analysis: cultural knowledge, first language knowledge, and religious knowledge. In each case, we were able to identity how cultural variations in these knowledge areas contributed to misunderstandings between parents and teachers.

Cultural Knowledge

Parents reported that sometimes teachers misinterpreted students' behaviors due to a lack of knowledge of students' cultures, a point illustrated in the following excerpts:

> You know how she (the teacher) started, 'I think your son doesn't respect women. He doesn't look at me when I talk to him' … In our culture, it is a sign of respect. When the children talk to their parents and elders, they look down. (Dae[1], South Korea)

> Recently I was talking to one of the ESL teachers. She said she had one student from Pakistan and he is always following the teachers. She said, "I'm annoyed because he is following me all the time". I said "it is not that he is following you, but it shows respect. You know in our culture you can't walk in front of the teacher, so all he is doing is showing respect for you". (Aneeka, Pakistan)

In Canadian classrooms, students are expected to look at the teacher in the eye and to walk beside their teachers. The parents from Korea and Pakistan would consider these behaviors as unacceptable acts of insolence. Their children, however, often unaware of the social interaction rules in the Canadian classroom, are framed by their original cultural references, that is, lowering their heads and walking behind teachers to show respect. Regretfully, without appropriate transcultural knowledge, the teachers misinterpreted students' actions.

The lack of understanding of students' cultural practices had a negative impact on immigrant parents. For example, Tyrone reported an incidence that happened to a Sudanese family in Calgary:

> One day, a 6-year-old child opened the fridge, got some food out, and played with the food. He went back to the fridge several times and got more food out and played with the food. His mother was tired of this and told the kid and his two siblings, if you guys go again to the fridge, there is a lion there. Her purpose was not to let the kids touch the fridge … It came out in a classroom conversation. The 6-year old told his teacher he could not get food from the fridge because there was a lion there. So automatically, the teacher reported this incidence to social services. Social services took it seriously and they took the kids away. A legal battle dragged the parents to the courts. (Tyrone, Sudan)

For the African parent, saying "there is a lion in the refrigerator" was a way to scare her child in order for her child not to play with food. Regretfully, the teacher misinterpreted it and perceived the parent to be neglectful of the child's basic needs, which led to the conclusion that the parent was abusive.

While holding on to the traditions of their first cultures, some participants reported that they were willing to make adaptations to the local environment. For example, Neera said:

> One of the most important aspects of Indian culture is respect for parents and for elders. When my elder sister visited me, I hugged her, kissed her, and touched her feet. I want my children to blend the fusion of mixing cultures. They don't have to touch the feet, but they need to respect the adults and never talk back to parents. (Neera, India)

[1] All participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

Neera explained that touching the feet of the parents is a mark of love and respect for them in India. In Canada, she did not request her children to follow the physical gesture required in her country of origin, but insisted on instilling in their children the principles of respect for adults and parents.

First Language Knowledge

Beyond cultural knowledge, the participants emphasized the importance of first language in their children's learning. Thirty-six out of thirty-eight parents in the study, however, reported that their children's schools often ignored their children's previous language knowledge. Parents thus informally taught their first languages to their children at home. The parents provided a number of reasons for passing on their linguistic values to their children. For some, teaching and preserving the first language at home was an important means of staying connected to relationships, cultural values, and identities forged in their home countries:

> I want my children to keep up with Punjabi, so that they can talk to their grandparents. (Nim, Pakistan)
>
> Language is culture. It is my language that makes my colour, who I am, and my culture. (Tamika, Somali)

Watching her children's gradual loss of the Somali language, Tamika felt the threat of an additional loss of Somali identity and culture, a concern echoed by most of the participants. Another parent, Kamal went on to stress the political dimension that makes it even more powerful for the parent to stay connected with their first language[2]:

> Bangladesh used to be part of Pakistan. At that time the ruler wanted to impose Urdu as the national language. We are speaking Bengali, so Bengali people fought for their right to speak Bengali. Many people were shot. People gave their lives for the language.

Other parents listed more pragmatic reasons for keeping up the home language:

> I think, these days, having more than one language is a good skill. You know our country is growing and there are many immigrants coming. I think most jobs will require additional languages. (Sana, Pakistan)
>
> One of the reasons I help him (her son) maintain Nepalese is that he can translate the concepts in Nepalese into English, so it will help him with his school learning. (Parveen, Nepal)

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[2]Kamal was referring to the Bengali Language Movement. Bengali is the primary language spoken in Bangladesh. In 1948, when Bangladesh used to be East Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan ordained Urdu as the sole national language. This new law sparked extensive protests among the Bengali-speaking majority of East Pakistan, including a protest organized by student demonstrators in 1952. The movement reached its climax when police killed student demonstrators on February 21. This day has been declared as the International Mother Language Day by UNESCO. For Kamal, his native language represents his culture and identity, as well as a tribute to the ethno-linguistic rights of people around the world. Kamal argued that an individual's right to use and learn his/her own native language is a basic human right (see also Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006).

Sana perceived that acquiring a new language would be useful for future employment in a global world. Parveen realized the first language is an important learning tool for transferring the concepts from first to second language education.

Religious Knowledge

Beyond cultural and first language knowledge, the participants bring their religious knowledge to enrich our educational environments. Thirteen out of the thirty-eight participants were Muslim parents from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Algeria, and Somalia. They reported that part of the reason motivating their immigration was that they were attracted by the official policies of multiculturalism in Canada. On the one hand, these parents believed that "*Canada has given us the right to practice our religion, which is in the Charter of Rights*" (Manibha, Pakistan). On the other hand, public education in Canada is focused on a Christian perspective and calendar (Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Spinner-Halev, 2000). The Eurocentric nature of public schools means that religious minority parents need to constantly negotiate parameters for their children's involvement in school curricula and activities (Zine, 2001).

Misconceptions About the Muslim Headscarf

One of the issues that Muslim immigrant parents faced was the negotiation of the religious expressions of minority groups in schools. This included allowing Muslim girls to wear a headscarf. The participants explained that Muslim girls and women wearing the headscarf were merely exercising their right to practice their religion, but this practice was not widely accepted by the Canadian society. Sana commented:

> I think it is a basic rule from our religion. When a woman goes out in public, she will be covering her hair. If I want to cover my head, I should be accepted. Right now I think there are about more than sixty percent people who don't accept that. (Sana, Pakistan)

Manibha, mother of a 17-year-old daughter, reflected on how her daughter was perceived by her peers when she wore a headscarf in physical activities in school:

> She (her daughter) is involved in all kinds of activities. She plays football, soccer, volleyball, mountain climbing, everything. They (her daughter's peers) comment why you wear this, you might get hurt. (Manibha, Bangladesh)

For Manibha's daughter, wearing a headscarf did not inhibit her from participating in all kinds of physical activities. Her peers perceived that wearing a headscarf would pose a risk to her safety in the sports.

Other participants stated the belief that wearing a headscarf can be harmful was unfounded. Hassan referred to a controversy about an 11-year-old girl who was

banned from a soccer tournament by a Quebec referee because she wore a headscarf. The referee applied the rules of the soccer federation, insisting the ban can protect children from being strangled. Hassan argued that this ban, based on misconceptions rather than evidences, was "political prejudice." Hassan said:

> If they have some studies to claim that this is harmful, that these girls get hurt when they play soccer because of the headscarf, it is good. They don't have a single incidence to prove that. This is more political prejudice than the fact. (Hassan, Pakistan)

While based on one-widely reported incident, this form of prejudice informed the perception and treatment of Muslim parents elsewhere in Canada. For example, Sarita explained how some teachers initially reacted toward her:

> I wear a headscarf when I go to parent-teacher conferences. The majority of the people, I have noticed, their initial impression about me would be I am a dumb person because I wear that. (Sarita, India)

Sarita's statement revealed her perception of the attitudes of some teachers toward her. She was considered as "dumb" because of the teachers' misconception about the headscarf. In fact, Sarita received all her education in English and obtained a Master of Science in India before she immigrated to Canada. She spoke fluent English, volunteered in school activities, and participated in the school council. Sarita responded: "They (the teachers) thought I am oppressed. I am not oppressed at home." As a single mother, she raised two children by herself and encouraged her daughter to pursue a law career.

Exemptions from Certain Classes

Twelve out of the thirteen Muslim parents believed that Muslim girls should be segregated from the opposite sex. Consequently, girls are not allowed to wear swimming suits or dance with boys. Aneeka, mother of a 15-year-old daughter said:

> In our religion we believe in gender segregation. The man is not supposed to see the beauty of women. I did go and talk to the teacher at the beginning of the school year that my daughter does not swim and dance with boys. (Aneeka, Pakistan)

Aneeka requested that her children be exempted from swimming and dancing classes. Sana, mother of a 12-year-old daughter, expressed her disappointment that some teachers were not sensitive to her religious needs and did not allow exemptions:

> I went to the school and told her teacher we don't allow her to participate in the swimming classes. The teacher was annoyed. She didn't understand and made a big deal: "Oh, this is physical education class, you know, she has to be part of it."

Donika went beyond exemptions by suggesting that schools need to rethink the requirement for swimwear:

> This kid was crying because she was not allowed to wear the swimming suit. The teacher in fact forced her to wear the swimming suit. The only thing that this teacher had in her mind is that you can only swim in the swimming suit. That's not true, a real mistake. (Donika, Suriname)

Donika stressed the importance for educators to be open to different perspectives and to realize that there are many different ways of doing the same thing. She suggested that schools should allow Muslim girls to wear full body suits instead of swim suits.

Not all the participants were dismayed. Some participants expressed their satisfaction that their children's schools have made accommodation for their religious practices:

> The teacher understood that they (Muslim girls) can swim, wearing full clothes, and there should be no men with them. The teacher would close the door and they have a separate swimming time for the girls. She respects our religion. I was very satisfied. (Manibha, Bangladesh)

While some parents did not permit their daughters to participate in swimming classes, Noreen, mother of 10-year-old and 16-year-old daughters, had no objection to her daughters swimming with boys: "My younger daughter is a good swimmer. She already had swimming lessons when she was back home and her instructor was a man, so I have no problem." Noreen considered herself more liberal than other parents.

Accommodation of Prayer

The Muslim parents in the study believed that Muslim students should be allowed to pray during school hours because Islam requires them to pray five times daily. Referring to Muslim students, Hassan proposed that "if they have to do it in school, I think they should be allowed, especially in the winter there are one or two prayers which occur during the school time." Nim and Hassan expressed their satisfactions that their children's schools have made accommodation to their religious practices:

> We have Friday prayer. The school set up a room for the Muslim kids and they pray there. I'm so happy this has been done. (Nim, Pakistan)
>
> For Muslim, Friday is our holy day. I wrote a letter to my son's school and asked him to take off on Friday afternoon so that he can perform his prayer in the mosque. The principal gave his permission. (Hassan, Pakistan)

Manibha, however, expressed her frustration with some schools' unwillingness to accommodate her religious practices:

> A friend of mine told the principal that her daughter has to pray. 'Could you just give her five minutes in any corner of the room?' The principal told her, 'I'm sorry. I can't do that. I don't want to make the school into a mosque.'

Parent Knowledge Mobilization and Advocacy

Many participants reported that despite the promotion of multiculturalism in Canadian schools, their children continued to be the victims of demeaning treatments by some Canadian students motivated by ignorance and stereotypes. The participants learned different strategies to intervene in their children's schools. For example, Shin stated that in Korean culture, parents are not supposed to take the initiative to communicate with teachers. She learned from her neighbor that in Canada, if parents have concerns, they have the right to approach their children's teachers. Shin reported that although her English "was not good," she approached her daughter's teacher immediately when an incident happened to her daughter:

> My daughter is the only Korean in her class. One day when she was erasing the board, a student shouted behind her back, 'Korean student, you have to go back to your country. Why are you here?' She heard it, turned around, but couldn't recognize that voice. She was very upset. (Shin, South Korea)

She explained to the teacher what happened and how upset her daughter was. Shin was satisfied that the teacher followed up with a whole class discussion about diversity and the harm of racism and anti-immigrant sentiments. Shin was willing to change a cultural practice from her country of origin and learned to advocate on her daughter's behalf.

Aneeka took a different approach. When her son was called "Osama bin Laden" by one of his peers in Grade 5, Aneeka advised her son to ignore such racist comments:

> My child told me somebody called me Osama bin Laden. I asked him, 'are you?' 'No, Mom.' 'Don't worry. You know you are not anything like that. You are a good Muslim boy. You believe in peace. You are not a terrorist. Don't let them make fun of you.' (Aneeka, Pakistan)

Aneeka stated how stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim immigrants sometimes create low self-esteem among Muslim immigrant children and stress the importance of building her son's confidence. She helped her son to overcome adversity, teasing, and stereotypes from classmates by cultivating the child's spiritual (Muslim) identity. Unlike Shin who learned to advocate for her daughter at school, Aneeka turned to her spiritual resources to develop her son's confidence at home.

Parveen encouraged her son, aged 12, to participate in the "Write Off Racism Poetry Contest" organized by ACCESS, Canadian Learning Television in Edmonton. She was proud that her son's poem[3] ranked 4th among the 12–18 age-group. She

[3]Mirror Image

> Whatever you call me,
> Different could be my name;
> The color you see in my skin-outside,
> Might not be your same;
> But don't create a wall in between
> Thinking me a "creature new"

said: “He sometimes feels discriminated against as an ESL student. This poem is really related to what he is going through.” The poem reflected on her son’s actual experience of discrimination as an immigrant student. Her son was ridiculed about his phenotype and his English ability by his peers, who gave little thought to his character, personality, or feeling. She encouraged her son to think positively. She told her son: “You have visited so many countries and you know different languages. Respect what you have in a positive way.” In this way, Parveen taught her son how to advocate not only for himself, but also for other ESL students, who might share similar experiences. The narratives of Shin, Aneeka, and Parveen demonstrated that all actively learned strategies of parental involvement in order to develop capacity for their children to combat discrimination and racism at school.

Discussion and Implications

It is important to understand the significant knowledge possessed by many parents in the study, including their understanding of ESL learners’ cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, life experiences of living with many cultures, and community issues. The results of the study, however, demonstrate parental value and knowledge were often ignored and misunderstood by the members of the dominant society.

If you look deep down your heart-
You’ll find -I’m you!!
You might be fair Snow-white of my fairytale
I might be black demon or brown Gin,
but Oh well,
Skin is our armor; not what we really are,
Same red blood we have and salty tear.
Don’t pull a curtain between us two-
If you wipe clouds of your eyes-
You’ll see -I’m you!!
I’m alien in your country;
so you’ll be in mine.
English is my second language, but I’ve an open mind.
Don’t hit me with Racism-thinking “Me” not “You”
If you ask alone with your heart-
You’ll find I’m you!!!

Importance of Understanding Parents' Cultural Knowledge

The example of "there is a lion in the refrigerator" suggests that members of two different groups can observe the same event or "streams of behavior" but have quite different cultural interpretations based on different theories (Spradley, 1980, p. 7). The parent tried to prevent the child from continuing with behavior unacceptable to her although attractive to the child. By using what Anglos would call "if you misbehave, the bogeyman downstairs will get you," the parent reconditioned the child to the fridge by replacing the "attractant" in the child's mind with an aversion-fear of anxiety would now be provoked and the result achieved by the parent. For the Sudanese parent, saying "there is a lion in the refrigerator" is a scare tactic used by parents in many cultures to discipline children. The teacher took the story literally and assumed the child was not being fed or in fear. She assumed the parent prevented the child from eating and thus the parent must be abusive and neglectful. The teacher's assumption was based upon permissive culture of children in North America where many are allowed to eat anytime (Barton, 2009). This example demonstrated misunderstanding of what counts as child-rearing and discipline values deeply embedded in cultures. Beyond cultural differences, it seems in the story that the Sudanese family is being singled out and that their culture is being seen as far more suspect than any particular actions being taken by individual families (Este & Tachble, 2009). The example illustrates that it is important for teachers to understand ESL students' cultural backgrounds and to critically examine their own attitudes toward other cultures, so that they will not misjudge their students' behaviors (Helmer & Eddy, 2003).

The participants noted that cultural practices are not static, and their meanings of culture are continually being negotiated. For example, Neera did not request her children to touch the feet in order to show respect for elders, but insisted on passing on cultural knowledge by instilling in her children the core value of respect for adults and parents. In Hoerder et al's (2006) transcultural knowledge framework, this parent exemplified a creative performance of converging and merging cultures that linked past with present.

Importance of First Language

Many scholars make strong arguments for first language use in schools (Coelho, 2004; Cummins, 2009). Teachers can encourage immigrant students to use their first language in their learning experience. However, most parents in the study reported that their children's schools often ignored their children's previous language knowledge. The participants recognized that students' first language is an important component of their identity, a useful tool for thinking and learning, and a valuable medium for effective communication in the family and the community. The participants' argument for the importance of first language challenged the assumption that English language teaching should be conducted monolingually through English.

Parents' advocacy for their children's linguistic rights speaks strongly to the need for a policy for multilingual realities in Canadian schools. Since the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1969 (Royal Commission, 1969), bilingualism in Canada has explicitly referred to French and English. However, many other languages such as Chinese, Spanish, German, Japanese, Greek, and Ukrainian are also offered in schools (Wu, 2005). Students whose native language is neither English nor French need to have their cultural and linguistic knowledge recognized, respected, and integrated into school programming and social practice. This suggests an expansion beyond official bilingualism to embrace multilingual education (Cummins, 2009; Hébert et al., 2008). Giampapa (2010) provided a good example of how a Grade 4 teacher utilized her own and her students' multilingual abilities to create learning opportunities for all students in a Toronto school.

Religious Diversity

Given that Statistics Canada predicts that the number of Canadians belonging to minority religious communities will grow to approximately 10% of the population by 2017, public schools that promote multiculturalism can no longer afford to ignore questions of religious pluralism and barriers to religious freedom (Seljak, Schmidt, Stewart, & Bramadat, 2008). Religious freedom is a fundamental right (Russo & Hee, 2008; Syed, 2008). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Parliament of Canada, 1982) and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Minister of Justice, 1988) recognize that all individuals have the right to freedom of religion.

For many participants, the right to wear religious attire in public schools is associated with the right to practice and observe their religion. Public schools are obliged to accept religious symbols such as permitting Muslim girls to wear a headscarf given the fact this freedom of religious expression does not constitute a real risk to personal safety or learning environments (Barnett, 2008). It is also important for educators to challenge their assumptions about Muslim women wearing a headscarf. The example about how some teachers perceived Sarita, a parent, to be "dumb" because Sarita wore her headscarf when she went to the parent–teacher conference revealed the teachers' misconceptions about the Muslim headdress. These assumptions were largely based on stereotypes "reminiscent of the long-gone colonial era" (Rezai-Rashti, 1994, p. 37). In this case, Sarita received messages of unintelligence because she was wearing her headscarf, a marker of incompetence. On the contrary, Sarita, with a Master of Science in English in India, actively participated in her children's education in Canadian schools. Her participation challenges the global frameworks that depict Muslim women as submissive figures in need of emancipation (Syed, 2008).

Muslim parents in the study requested to exempt their children from certain classes such as dancing and swimming in public schools. Zine (2001) explained the reason why Muslim children are not allowed to dance is that "physical contact between males and females is allowed only among close family members … Social distance within

the Islamic tradition is therefore also gendered and situations of casual physical contact between males and females violate Islamic moral codes" (p. 407). For some Muslim parents, looking at members of the opposite sex in "immodest dress" is against their beliefs (Spinner-Halev, 2000). Religious continuity within Canadian schools is important for the participants. For teachers, dancing and swimming are part of school curricula and students are required to participate in these classes for their physical and social development. Where the rule in swimming class is that everyone must wear swimming suits or in gym class shorts and T-shirts, religious students should be exempt from the class or be put in an alternative class (Spinner-Halev, 2000). The clothing requirement should also be rethought, and students should be allowed to wear full body suits.

Some Muslim parents in the study requested accommodation of prayer in public schools. These requests call for going beyond conservative and liberal multiculturalism by challenging the normality of secularism and Christian curricula of public schools with the recognition of the religious diversity (Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Spinner-Halev, 2000). Some public schools in Calgary provided classrooms or gym rooms for prayer, while other schools rejected parents' requests. According to the Calgary Board of Education policy, the principal can authorize student-initiated prayer (Calgary Board of Education, n.d.). However, one principal stated that "I don't want to make the school into a mosque." This statement reveals that the principal perceives it is his duty to maintain a secular school environment. It also reveals that the principal fails to recognize that religion is an essential part of education for some students and fails to accommodate religious difference. Jasmine Zine recounts a similar story of an Arab Canadian who, as a member of a Muslim students' association, tried to secure a room for prayer in his public school. The principal adamantly refused, stating "this is not a place for religion, it's a place for education" (Zine, 2001, p. 303).

Advocacy and Capacity Building for Immigrant Students

The results of the study have uncovered how parents activated their personal knowledge to build their children's capacities for combating discrimination and racism (Dei, 1996). Parents in this study used different approaches to help their children construct a counter-discourse to racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious forms of discrimination. For example, Shin's narratives speak powerfully and poignantly about the ways in which, despite her limited English language skills, she attempted to advocate for more inclusive schooling practices for immigrant children (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000). She turned to her neighbor for strategies of approaching teachers and constructed her transcultural knowledge by integrating Canadian approach of communicating with teachers (Hoerder et al., 2006). Aneeka lamented that most of what the Canadian public and Canadian teachers and students know about Muslim immigrants is based solely on biased media coverage. Aware of the negative stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists, created by a post-9/11

narrative (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005), she focused on countering these stereotypes by stressing the nature of peace in Islam. She activated her personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958), particularly her spiritual resources to help her son overcome discrimination. Parveen, with a master's degree in creative writing, utilized her parenting knowledge (Pushor, 2008), and her education background to help her son develop a sense of resilience. Her son's poem illustrates how he learned to resist racism and its hostilities and to balance struggle with hope. Shin, Aneeka, and Parveen all demonstrated that advocating for their children and teaching their children to self-advocate in the face of racism were other forms of parental involvement.

Theoretical Implications

The results of the study indicate the significance of the need to recognize immigrant parent knowledge. For the most part, the literature on immigrant parents uses a deficit model, highlighting parents' inability to speak English and their difficulties communicating with schools (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Gibson, 2000). Moving beyond deficit models of immigrant parental involvement, the findings of the study reveal that immigrant parents are important constructors of knowledge about children, teaching, and learning. It is significant for teachers and school administrators to recognize and make use of immigrant parent knowledge, cultural, first language, and religious knowledge. Such recognition requires teachers and school administrators to unlearn their privilege (Andreotti, 2007) and learn to learn from immigrant parents in order to provide a better public education for immigrant students.

Furthermore, the results of this study illustrate the significance of the need to expand conventional models of parental involvement to recognize immigrant parent engagement (López, 2001). In the Canadian system of education, teachers typically expect parents to participate in school events and show concern for their children's educational success. Traditional models of family–school partnership include six types of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 2001). These types of parent involvement seem to work well with middle-class parents. The study suggests that even though immigrant parents did not volunteer at school functions or attend school council meetings, they supported their children's learning at home in the form of passing on cultural and linguistic values. The transmission of cultural and linguistic values has rarely been documented in the literature as a type of parental involvement (see López for an exception). Immigrant parents in Lopez's study took their children to work with them in the fields and taught them to appreciate the value of their education, thus transmitting appropriate sociocultural values as a type of parental involvement. Building upon Lopez's study, this research suggests that the immigrant parents saw transmitting their first language knowledge, negotiating the terrain of both home and school cultures, and helping their children combat various forms of racism as important forms of involvement that their children needed. These unique forms of parent engagement expand narrow conceptions of parent–school

relations that tend to reinforce and serve the interests of white, middle-class families. This significant expansion to parental involvement has important implications for Canadian schools and education practitioners.

Practical Implications

This study contributes valuable information for any school administrators, teachers, or education policymakers interested in enhancing their ability to work sensitively and effectively with students and parents from cultures different from their own. Several practical recommendations for educational personnel are made to show how educators can connect to the cultural spaces and images of schooling and learning that are out there in communities of new Canadians.

In this rapidly changing social context, schools need to better address the needs of students and parents from a multicultural, multilingual population. Guo and Mohan (2008) suggest that educators and administrators need to recognize that educational tasks may be given culturally divergent interpretations; that is, teachers and parents may have culturally divergent views of the educational agenda such as homework. Schools need to learn immigrant parents' views on education and cultural differences on home–school communication (Dyson, 2001; Guo, 2007; Li, 2006; Ran, 2001). Schools need to understand that cultural differences in conceptions regarding schools, teachers, and education actually underlie often conflicting views of parental involvement between immigrant parents and North American educators. Schools, therefore, need to become learning organizations "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

Incorporating the home cultures of immigrant parents into the school curriculum challenges educators to rethink predetermined involvement typologies that cause immigrant parents to be labeled as unwilling or uninvolved (Dyson, 2001; López, 2001). For example, parents may visit the classroom to share their knowledge (Pushor, 2008) or students may be given homework assignments that require them to interview their parents or their grandparents about their communities or their immigration experiences. This kind of activity helps to acknowledge parents' cultural values and make parents feel they can provide valuable contributions. This also helps students make better connections between the school curriculum and their personal experiences, which in turn will help students succeed academically.

Validating the first languages of diverse families is another approach to engage immigrant parents. An example would be the use of dual-language books, where the text is in both English and another language. A kindergarten teacher, a graduate student in my course, invited parents from 11 different languages to be part of a family reading program in her classroom. Every Friday, she allocated 25 minutes at the drop-off time for parent volunteers to read to small groups of children, often from dual-language books, on their own or with a partner parent reading the English text

(Harrison, personal communication, December 16, 2010). The teacher reported the increasing appreciation of the children toward their classmates' multilingual abilities, as well as how much the parents of these children valued the opportunity to share their first languages and be part of the learning community.

Beyond validating the cultural and first language knowledge of diverse families, public schools are required to inform administrators and teachers about the religious practices of their students. Religious discrimination derives in part from religious illiteracy. This illiteracy has meant that teachers (the majority of who are at least nominally Christian) often fail to discuss or even understand the religions dimensions of policy challenges (Neufeld, personal communication, January 6, 2010). Religious illiteracy can be addressed with mandatory education on world religions as subjects for respectful study but not indoctrination for all pre-service teachers, elementary, and secondary students[4] (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008; Bramadat & Selijak, 2005). Religion is an important part of a well-rounded academic education. Learning about it will help teachers and students overcome their fear and support social interaction between immigrant and non-immigrant students (Spinner-Halev, 2000).

It is important for educators to provide institutionalized means for the explicit recognition and representation of oppressed groups. These means include modifications of school curricula, dress codes, provision of prayer rooms for Muslim students (Kanu, 2008), and also state funding for privately established Muslim schools in the same way that Catholic schools are funded,[5] which are necessary to reflect contemporary and religiously pluralistic realities.

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[4] Alberta Learning has approved three courses about religion for teaching in any high school: Religious Ethics 20, Religious Meaning 20, and World Religions 30. These courses are designated as optional, not mandatory (see Hiemstra & Brink, 2006).

[5] Roman Catholic schools in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories along with other religiously based schools receive public funding in many provinces.

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Chapter 3
The Challenge of Family Engagement Policy Implementation: A Case Study of Title I School–Family Compacts in the USA

Michael P. Evans

Abstract Using critical discourse analysis, this chapter highlights how policies, and the way they are framed using particular language, can create and reinforce the very forms of parent involvement they seek to discourage. The chapter focuses on Title I schools in the USA and highlights parents' lack of agency as well as the absence of student voice when it comes to decision-making in schools about curriculum and learning in different contexts.

Keywords Family engagement · Education policy · Critical discourse analysis USA

Introduction

Policymakers, researchers, and education leaders agree that family, school, and community partnerships are a critical part of student achievement (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Positive outcomes include higher graduation rates (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005), improved attitudes toward school (Rivera & Waxman, 2011), and increased test scores (Van Voorhis, 2011). As a result, in the USA there is an increasing amount of legislation that is targeted at motivating schools and districts to engage with parents. However, there is little research regarding the efficacy and impact of

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these policy initiatives. This chapter utilizes a combination of critical discourse analysis with corpus linguistics to provide an in-depth examination of one common parent involvement policy, the requirement for a school–family compact in Title I schools. The study explores how the discourses in these documents contribute to the framing of family, school, and community partnerships and how the role of power is addressed within the compacts. Findings indicate that upon implementation Title I compacts primarily reinforce hierarchical models of parental involvement and emphasize transactional encounters over and above partnership activity that may run counter to original policy objectives. The chapter concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educators regarding potential best practices for policy implementation efforts in this field.

Family Engagement Policy in the USA

Family involvement has been a part of the education policy landscape since President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated the War on Poverty in the 1960s. At the federal level Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are all examples of policies that include components related to parent involvement. Historically, these initiatives represent scattershot attempts to encourage parent involvement and fail to achieve a cogent and comprehensive approach to family engagement. As noted by Weiss et al.,

> With family involvement funding streams and programs spread across federal departments, it has been difficult to develop systemic, integrated, and sustainable efforts. Scattered activities and events fail to make the connection between family engagement and student outcomes, and give the impression that family engagement is an "add-on" rather than integrated into academic goals (2010, p. 7).

More recent legislative attempts to engage parents have focused on using families as levers for reform vis-à-vis school choice mechanisms (Rogers, 2006), an approach that is unlikely to engender more positive home–school relationships. The establishment of strong home and school connections can be challenging, and this is particularly true with low-income and minority populations (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Policymakers have sought to address this challenge by embedding parent involvement in Title I legislation.

Family Engagement and Title I Schools

In the USA, 44% of children currently live in low-income families (Addy & Wight, 2012). Poverty impacts the whole child, as research indicates that there are negative effects on cognitive development, health, and behavior (Anyon, 2005; Sparks, 2012). Families living in poverty may have difficulty accessing quality healthcare,

early childhood education, summer or after-school activities, and affordable housing (Ladd, 2012). Title I legislation provides additional resources for schools with a high concentration of poverty. The goal is to improve academic outcomes for students and to support low-income families by bridging the gap between home and school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Title I legislation requires schools to implement practices that will further engage low-income families and to report on their building's progress. While the research in support of family engagement is promising, there are a number of challenges that may hinder the ability of low-income families to become more involved with schools including: a lack of transportation and childcare; inflexible work schedules; and feelings of intimidation based on a lack of educational attainment, cultural differences, and language barriers (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002; Huss-Keeler, 1997). In addition, low-income parents may lack trust in schools based on negative experiences during their own education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Rapp & Duncan, 2011).

Administrators and teachers in Title I schools acknowledge the important role of family and community involvement but often struggle to engage low-income families. In one mixed-methods study focused on administrative, teacher, and parent perceptions of Title I School Improvement Plans, both administrators and teachers identified community involvement as their greatest challenge (Isernhagen, 2012). In the same study, efforts by administrators who sought to address low levels of engagement were primarily focused on home–school communication. While strong communication is vital to effective home–school relationships, it is only one component of a more comprehensive engagement strategy that seeks to include families as partners. An overemphasis on providing more information as a response to low levels of engagement is a typical strategy for educational leaders trained in managerial approaches to community work that "enforce circumscribed and institutionalized roles for parents vis-à-vis the school" (Crowson & Boyd, 2001, p. 12). It assumes that a lack of awareness is the primary cause for disengagement and fails to consider the possibility that more systemic issues may be involved. For example, school outreach efforts are often focused on changing the behaviors of minority and low-income families so they are more aligned and supportive of the goals of school leaders (de Carvalho, 2001; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011). This type of school-centric approach to family, school, and community partnerships narrowly defines success as being linked to increased student achievement on standardized tests (Auerbach, 2012). Although academic achievement is an important goal, families may be more interested in addressing some of the underlying social and political issues that have resulted in such drastic educational inequities (Olivos et al., 2011). In this case, low levels of engagement are not due to a lack of awareness or interest but rather are a byproduct of different priorities.

In an attempt to address the challenge of connecting with low-income families, legislators in the USA have included several parent involvement mandates in the ESEA. Among these, legislative requirements are a demand for the development of a school–family compact for schools receiving Title I funding. According to the ESEA legislation, the compact "is a written agreement between the school and

the parents of children participating in Title I, Part A program that identifies the activities that the parents, the entire school staff, and the students will undertake to share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement. In addition, the school–parent compact outlines the activities that the parents, school staff, and students will undertake to build and develop a partnership to help the children achieve to the state's high academic standards" (Improving America's Schools Act, 1994, sec. 1118). The compacts are intended to be collaborative documents outlining the shared insights of multiple stakeholders and reflecting the unique sociocultural context of each school building. These compacts are examples of social discourse that contribute to the production of family engagement practices writ large. They are an attempt to promote interaction between educators and families by requiring schools to initiate communication regarding shared expectations. However, according to a 2008 monitoring report, compliance with ESEA parental involvement requirements is the most significant weakness for most states (Stevenson & Laster, 2008). Anecdotal reports suggest that most schools remain content to rely on stock language from school–family compact templates and fail to engage in a collaborative design process (Henderson, Carson, Avallone, & Whipple, 2011). This chapter critically examines these school–family compacts to better understand how the language in these documents contributes to the framing of family, school, and community partnerships and the potential implications for family engagement policy.

Methodology

This study uses a combination of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics to explore school–family compacts, one common example of federal parent involvement policy. Critical discourse analysis has been described as "an attempt to bring social theory and discourse analysis together to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse constructs, becomes constructed, represents, and becomes represented by the social world" (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & O'Garro, 2005, p. 366). The "critical" component of CDA places an emphasis on the role of power as it relates to class, race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation (Fairclough, 1995). Although there is not one way to do critical research, there are some shared assumptions:

> Critical theorists, for example, believe that thought is mediated by historically constituted power relations. Facts are never neutral and are always embedded in contexts. Some groups in society are privileged over others, and this privilege leads to differential access to services, goods, and outcomes. Another shared assumption is that one of the most powerful forms of oppression is internalized hegemony, which includes both coercion and consent. (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 368)

These assumptions are used to frame this study of school–family compacts. One criticism of CDA is that researchers using this approach rarely acknowledge how different audiences will interpret texts differently (Widdowson, 1995). In other words, the ideologies that inform interpretation of the text may become equally oppressive.

Admittedly, this approach is prone to researcher bias, and other researchers and educators might interpret these compacts differently, but as the goal is to identify and challenge underlying assumptions related to power additional interpretations are encouraged as a means to further conversations related to family and school relationships in low-income communities (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

In an effort to ascertain if CDA findings regarding school–family compacts were generalizable to a larger population of Title I schools, a corpus linguistics approach was also incorporated into the study. Corpus linguistics involves the study of language in larger samples of text. This can help reduce bias (a common criticism of CDA) by working with a larger sample of texts that are culled from their natural contexts (Cameron, 2001). The corpus of school–family compacts was manually compiled (which differs from many larger corpus studies that utilize computer software). The school–family compacts make excellent subject matter because by definition they are contextually situated, co-constructed, and served the purpose of defining family, school, and student relations. The sample for this study was bound geographically, limiting the collection of compacts to the Midwest (OH, MN, MI, WI, IA, IL, IN, ND, SD, NE, KS, MO). It is important to note that the focus of this study is on the language that is used in the compacts and its framing of family–school relationships. It is possible that these documents may not reflect relational dynamics in practice. For example, students could possess a great deal of power in a school, but this might not be reflected by compact language. The decision to focus on the compacts is driven by the desire to understand how a federally mandated family involvement policy manifests itself in a school community.

Although school–family compacts are intended to be publicly available documents it was difficult to collect samples via direct contact with schools. Compacts were collected using an Internet search of school and district Web pages. As a result, this study uses a nonrandom sample since only schools with compacts available via the Internet are included. In total, 175 compacts were collected, representing roughly 1% of the compacts in the Midwest. The sample is in proportion to the population of each of the 12 states that were included in the study. Information regarding the size of the community, where the school was located, student racial demographics, and school level (elementary, middle, high school) was also collected.

The schools in the sample were located in communities of varying size. 52% of the schools were in communities with populations of less than 25,000, 25% were located in communities with populations ranging from 25,000 to 100,000, and 23% of the schools were in communities with populations of more than 100,000. The racial demographics the schools in the sample are also representative of the broader Midwest population. 77% of the schools were predominantly White, 14% of the schools were predominantly Black, 6% of the schools were predominantly Hispanic, and 3% of the schools in the sample did not have a racial majority. Finally, with regard to school level the sample includes elementary (69%), middle (10%) and high school (21%). For the purposes of this study, schools that combined traditional middle grades (6–8) with high school were coded as high school. The overall sample is reflective of the general statistics for Title I schools in the Midwest.

Data were coded and analyzed using the research software Dedoose. The compacts are intended to be a social document outlining the commitments of various education stakeholders (students, parents or caregivers, teachers, and occasionally administrators) in relationship with one another. Thus, the codes reflect directionality (e.g., parents → teachers, students → parents). The directionality indicates that action is taking place. As actions were examined in the pilot round of coding the research team noted a frequent use of the word "provide." Using a critical lens, it became clear that the word was being used in a variety of different ways. As we considered the situated meaning of "provide" in compact discourse, it was determined that the word really represented a broader concept of "giving" which appeared in the compacts in three primary ways. Each use signified a varying degree of power that was vested in the giver (Gee, 2004): (1) "Give to"—to impart, inform, bestow, or allow; (2) "Give care"—to help, support, or assist; and (3) "Give in"—to obey, defer, or submit. This resulted in 36 initial codes based on a combination of direction and action, although not every code was applied (e.g., there were no examples of students "giving to" any of the other stakeholders). Table 3.1 provides an overview of the codes and some examples of the school–family compact texts. As the coding process continued, we added four additional codes to address excerpts where directionality was oriented toward the self (e.g., students will do their best) and a category for the monitoring of student behaviors by parents and caregivers.

Analysis was ongoing, and memos were created to identify emerging themes. Analytic memos signaled potential patterns and trends during the coding process, and when coding was complete, these themes were reconsidered based on their frequency

Table 3.1 Sample coding of title I school–family compacts

Interpretations of the concept "provide"	Directionality	Sample excerpts
Give to—to impart, inform, bestow, or allow	Parent to teacher	Provide the school with current contact information
	Teacher to parent	Inform parents of school and state standards
	Teacher to student	Provide students with high-quality teaching and leadership
Give care—to help, support, or assist	Parent to teacher	Communicate and work with the school to encourage my child's learning and positive behavior
	Teacher to parent	Teacher will seek ways to help parents become involved in their student's education
	Teacher to student	Will provide a positive classroom environment to encourage student achievement
Give in—to obey, defer, or submit	Student to teacher	Come prepared for daily for class work and complete all homework assignments
	Student to parent	Give all notes and information from the school to my parent/guardian daily

(see Appendices 1, 2, and 3). In total, the research team coded 4017 excerpts from 175 compacts.

Findings

Three primary findings resulted from the analysis of the compacts. First, the framework for family, school, and community partnerships created by the discourses in Title I school–family compacts largely reinforces school-centric family involvement models. Second, the relationships between actors in the compacts are primarily transactional in nature, and there is little discussion of partnership work. Third, students are primarily cast as objects in school–family compacts with little agency in their own education. These findings were consistent across the sample regardless of school level or the racial makeup of the student population (see Appendices 1, 2, and 3). The uniformity of the findings across both the states and school demographics suggest that the compacts are not being collaboratively developed with diverse stakeholders, since one would anticipate that the sociocultural context of each school building would result in more variation within the sample. It appears more likely that generic school–family compact templates are being adapted at each school in opposition to the stated policy goals (Henderson et al., 2011).

Reification of School-centric Family Involvement Models

Interpretation of discourse patterns in Title I school–family compacts revealed a clear model of family, school, and student relationships (see Fig. 3.1). The percentages in Fig. 3.1 represent the number of compacts that included these codes. While the language in the compacts indicates that both teachers and families possess power, the type and amount of power were significantly different. In our analysis, teachers possessed power based on their capacity to both instruct and support families and students. In contrast, families were overwhelming tasked with providing support to students and teachers. Students have little agency in the model and were expected to adhere to the rules established by both teachers and families, a finding that will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In relation to families and students, the language in the compacts depicted teachers as the more powerful actors. The source of their power is depicted through their capacity to both instruct and support families and students. While arguably these commitments are simply part of a teacher's job, the reciprocal dynamic in which families are only expected to offer support and students are expected to obey places teachers in a position of power. The potential knowledge and expertise of families and students do not appear to be recognized within the model. In fact, only 5.71% of the compacts included language that indicated families could provide schools with valuable information.

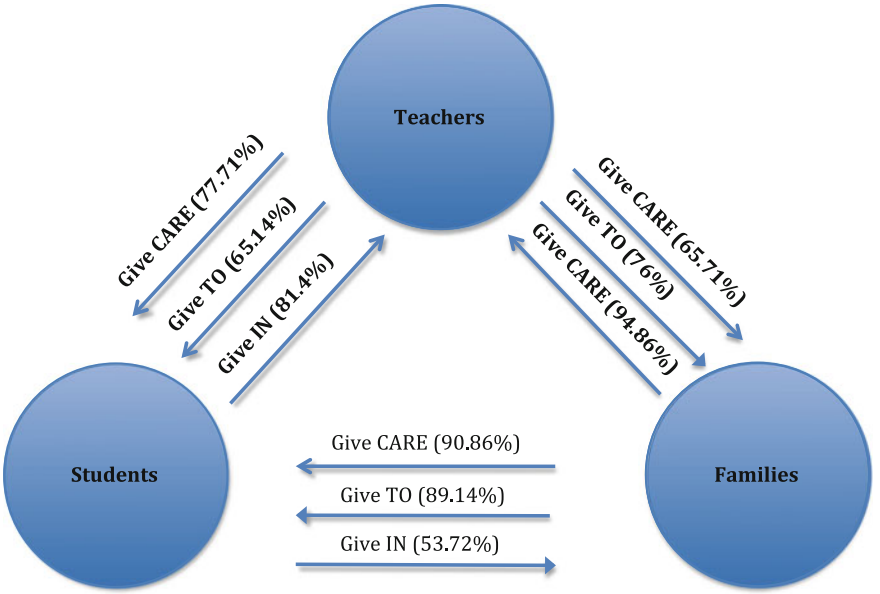

Fig. 3.1 Critical discourse model of title I school–family compacts

A closer examination of the compacts offers examples of these power dynamics in action. For instance, there were 102 excerpts where teachers provide (or give to) families information about volunteer opportunities, often accompanied by a list of acceptable possibilities or phrases like, "teachers will advertise volunteer opportunities *when needed*." In a related concept, parents are frequently expected to provide support to teachers by committing to "Volunteer time at school *if requested*." In these examples, the support and participation of families were actively solicited, but only as defined by the teacher. The language implies that teachers will only solicit parent involvement when they need something specific from them and that it is not okay for parents to volunteer unless they are asked. Even in the few examples where teachers reached out to families for advice, the focus remained on service to the school. For example, the teachers at one building committed to "Seek input from parents about how best to motivate other parents to become involved." In this case, the overarching goal is primarily focused on the needs of the school.

While the dominant message was that teachers generally "informed" parents (76%), there were also examples of teachers "giving care" to families (65.71%), often in relation to assisting them with understanding their child's academic status in class and by being accessible for questions or concerns. For example, many compacts offered variations of the following excerpt: "Provide you with assistance in understanding academic achievement standards and assessments and how to monitor your child's progress." This finding is consistent with prior research detailing a narrow focus on academic outcomes as the primary goal of family engagement (Auerbach, 2012; de Carvalho, 2001).

Parents were most often cast in a supporting role to teachers. There was some variation of parents providing support to teachers in 95% of the compacts, making it the most commonly applied code in the study. There was a particular emphasis on families helping teachers achieve behavioral goals. A typical excerpt would state, "I will support the school-wide discipline plan. I will encourage my child to follow school and classroom rules." With schools focused on academic achievement, family contributions were generally focused on monitoring the behavior of their children (occurring in 86% of the compacts). School attendance (79.5%), homework (57.2%), and television (42.8%) were the most frequently occurring areas of concern.

The language and phrasing that was used in many compacts left little doubt with regard to the balance of power in family–school relationships. For example, one compact asked parents to "Supervise the completion of my child's homework according to the teacher's guidelines." The paternalistic tone encountered in many compacts raises questions as to the extent that families were included in the development of the documents at all. When the family was called upon to provide information, it was generally limited to ensuring that contact information was kept up to date. More common were efforts to maintain school-centric family–school dynamics with excerpts like, "Model respect by going to the teacher first about any concerns, trying to keep the lines of communication open, and understanding that there are two sides to every issue."

There were similar power dynamics at play in relationships between teachers and students. Most notable is the type of instruction described in the compacts. Of the 204 excerpts that addressed instruction, we found 66% of the examples involved statements that promoted "banking style" approaches to teaching with the teacher playing the role of the expert. Only 33% of the excerpts described instruction that was "differentiated," "motivating and interesting," or "tailored to meet the needs of individual students." Students had very little agency in this model, a finding that will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The Absence of Partnership Discourse in School–Family Compacts

The second finding relates to the lack of partnership activity described in the compacts. This finding was surprising considering that Title I legislation explicitly states that "the school–parent compact outlines the activities that the parents, school staff, and students will undertake to build and develop a partnership to help the children achieve to the state's high academic standards" (ESEA, 1994). Descriptions of partnership or collaborative activities were almost nonexistent in the sample. Only 4.7% of the compacts addressed partnership activity with the majority of these codes being attributed to the stock line, "Parents will participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to our children's education." The qualifier "as appropriate" suggests that the school already knows what type of participation is deemed acceptable and hints at a mistrust of parents before a relationship is ever formed. When these stock excerpts are excluded, the total percentage of partnership examples drops to 2.7%.

Some compacts did include aspirational partnership language such as, "Parents and staff are an unbeatable team!" or "Hand in hand we will work together to build a better world." But these examples failed to offer any concrete suggestions for how families and schools could work together. Notable exceptions in the data included commitments to "Involve parents in the joint development of any school-wide program plan, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way" and "The school will reach out to identify and draw in local community resources that can assist staff and families." However, these types of specific actionable commitments were extremely rare (less than 1%). It is possible that schools may believe that basic transactional activities like keeping families informed about school activities are examples of partnership work, so perhaps part of the challenge is that the concept of authentic family and community partnership is foreign to educators, and concrete examples are rare (Evans, 2013).

The Objectification of Students in School–Family Compacts

Finally, the study found students had very little agency in school–family compacts. They were primarily asked to obey rules relating to homework completion, behavior, and attendance. A typical example from the elementary level reads, "I will not bring gum, candy, toys, or electronic devices to school." Older students were similarly told to adhere to school and family rules. The language of the compacts is consistent with the broader social phenomena of youth being framed as problems, a perception that is increasingly common in relation to minority and low-income students (Giroux, 2012).

In addition to submitting to school and familial rules, students are also expected to maintain a "positive disposition" at school (55% of compacts), performing a school-based version of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). Students are called upon to

"take pride in their school" and "promote a positive attitude toward school and community." These expectations are placed on students despite a complete lack of agency and the reality that conditions in many Title I schools are far from equitable (Kozol, 1991); students are told how they *should feel* about the schools that they attend. Indeed, the sole student responsibility relating to family and school relationships was the facilitation of communication, which was basically delivering correspondence from teachers (occurring in 62% of compacts). There was not a single example in any of the compacts of students being asked to contribute to their own education in a meaningful way. The absence of students in family, school, and community relationships is a topic that requires further investigation as there is an emerging body of research indicating value of student voice related to school improvement initiatives (Hands, 2014; Mitra, 2007).

Discussion and Implications

Analysis of school–family compacts indicates that frameworks for engagement in Title I schools reinforce school-centric models of involvement and may serve to further alienate low-income families (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Olivos, 2007). Teachers helping families understand academic standards, attendance at parent–teacher conferences, helping with homework, and volunteering at school activities are basic commitments that should be embraced by stakeholders seeking to improve low-income schools. However, these transactional interactions become problematic when they encapsulate the entirety of family involvement opportunities. The problem is that these models are conceptually limited and ignore the sociopolitical contexts that influence public education in low-income communities. How can issues like student achievement be addressed without a consideration of broader social issues?

Critics may argue that a perceived absence of family involvement forces schools to offer only limited and direct opportunities, but perhaps it is the very nature of these simplistic involvement rituals that contribute to the marginalization of low-income families. Shirley describes the critical distinction between parent involvement and engagement:

> Parental *involvement*—as practiced in most schools and reflected in the research literature—avoids issues of power and assigns parents a passive role in the maintenance of school culture. Parental *engagement* designates parents as citizens in the fullest sense—change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods. (1997, p. 73)

Unfortunately, this research suggests that many public schools continue to focus on transactional models of involvement that emphasize volunteerism and homework assistance. Research suggests that more meaningful and authentic forms of engagement have the potential to not only transform schools, but also the communities that they serve (Schutz, 2006). Anderson (1998) offers a conceptual framework of "authentic" participation that includes the following criteria: "broad inclusion," "relevant participation," "authentic local conditions and processes," "coher-

ence between means and ends of participation," and "focus on broader structural inequities" (p. 587). These are among the characteristics that have been cited in successful community-based approaches to school reform that have resulted in a broad array of positive outcomes for both students and communities (Hong, 2011; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009). This is a framework that stands in stark contrast to current models of participation that conceive of families as consumers and involvement practices as a form of public relations (Knight-Abowitz, 2011).

The inherent funds of knowledge (accumulated social capital and skills used to navigate everyday life) that families can offer are of the utmost importance to creating authentic partnerships, but—as this study indicates—they remain untapped resources in most schools (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Instead, the focus remains on what families are not contributing based on school-centric models of involvement. This deficit model approach further marginalizes parents and can result in mutual distrust between home and school (Jeynes, 2012). Families grow increasingly frustrated with narrow education reforms that seem to miss the big picture, while simultaneously feeling inadequate about their own abilities to support their children. Meanwhile, teachers come to see families as obstacles that must be overcome instead of partners with the capacity to help improve the quality of education for all students in a school (Evans, 2014).

Are the school–family compacts worth the trouble? Are genuine conversations taking place involving a diverse representation of stakeholders or are these documents perceived as another piece of paperwork in an ocean of bureaucratic responsibilities? What are the limits of mandated measures for family engagement, and how might the requirement of such metrics potentially corrupt the social process they are intended to enhance (Campbell, 1976)? Despite the current state of Title I compacts, there are indications that they possess transformative potential as a starting point for more meaningful and authentic educational policy dialogues (Winton & Evans, 2014). To achieve this goal, stakeholders must first consider how compacts are created at the school level. Limited research suggests that current compacts are primarily the products of school leaders (Stevenson & Laster, 2008), so changing the discourse of these documents will require increased relational work with families and communities.

The most recent iteration of the ESEA, the Every Student Succeeds Act, has tweaked the language related to school–family compacts. In this latest version, the term "Parent Involvement" has been struck and replaced with "Parent and Family Engagement." The language signals the desire of the policymakers to ensure that families are authentic stakeholders. The policy also includes the addition of the modifier "meaningful" in several places, perhaps in recognition that previous implementation efforts have been superficial. Unfortunately, research on policy implementation suggests that simply rewording the policy is unlikely to address the challenges that are occurring at the local level. McLaughlin (1987) writes, "Experience shows that some balance of pressure and support is essential. Pressure is required in most settings to focus attention on reform objectives; support is needed to enable implementation" (p. 173). While the ESEA has succeeded in using policy as a means to apply pressure to motivate family engagement efforts in schools, the benefits of these efforts will

likely not be achieved without the addition of targeted support for both school leaders and educators.

Part of the challenge is the lack of educator preparation related to family engagement on how to create meaningful relationships with families (Ferrara, 2009). It is a challenge that is further compounded by the immense pressures that are placed on school leaders to meet state and national standards (Shirley & Evans, 2007). Yet, new models of leadership are emerging that encourage more democratic decision-making by extending participation beyond school professionals (Anderson, 2009; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). These models share an appreciation for the competing demands that are placed on both schools and communities by emphasizing multilevel approaches that simultaneously address short-term and long-term goals in combination with an awareness of broader social issues. The leadership role of building administrators is important, as are the contributions of teachers and other staff members, but not to the exclusion of families and communities (Gordon & Louis, 2009; Rapp & Duncan, 2011). The recent growth of low-income family participation in community-based organizations that are working on education issues suggest that new models of engagement that honor the life experiences of families and empower them as critical collaborators can be effective (Olivos, 2007). These efforts have resulted in positive student outcomes and in some cases contributed to broader systemic changes in education (Mediratta et al., 2009). Community-based organizations can play an integral role in supporting these models by serving as intermediary organizations that can help facilitate communication between schools and communities (Lopez, Kreider, & Coffman, 2005). Perhaps policymakers should consider creating a role for these organizations to enhance relationship building between schools and communities. By engaging in more authentic dialogue centered around the development of school–family compacts, both educators and families can begin a process that both improve schools and the communities that they serve.

Conclusion

Schools and districts have struggled to meet the parental involvement requirements of Title I (Stevenson & Laster, 2008). This study provides insights regarding the potential impact of this failure on family, school, and community partnerships. Our research revealed a hegemonic discourse that dominates school–family compacts threatening to further marginalize low-income and minority families by undermining self-efficacy and authentic engagement opportunities (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). However, the outliers in this study, the few compacts that did call for equitable participation and collaboration, speak to the potential of this legislation and suggest that additional implementation support could be a worthy investment. Resources to improve the creation and use of the compacts are starting to emerge. For example, Connecticut's Department of Education recently hired experts in family-school relations to act as consultants and design a new training curriculum entitled, "A New Vision of Title I School-Parent Compacts." The curriculum was implemented in five

urban districts, with preliminary research from three participating schools suggesting that revised compacts can help increase both parent engagement and student achievement (Henderson et al., 2011). Of course, we must also remember that compacts are only one piece of the family engagement puzzle. Experts are increasingly advocating for comprehensive family engagement plans in lieu of "random acts of family involvement" (Weiss et al., 2010, p. 1). In one study focused on the implementation of a comprehensive set of parent engagement strategies (Solid Foundation) in 129 high poverty schools, student achievement scores in participant schools improved on state standardized tests. The improvement was statistically significant, and students enrolled in the project schools demonstrated more growth than their peers from matched schools across the state. Included among the parent engagement strategies employed by participating schools was a focus on having explicit discussions about the roles of parents, teachers, and students that were centered on the compacts (Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004). Trust and mutual respect were developed in these schools through efforts to have direct communication with all parents and families. The key is to use the compacts as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue targeted at enhancing the education of all students. While these limited examples are promising, it is clear that more research is necessary before compacts will be able to live up to their transformative potential.

Appendix 1. Percentage of Compacts Including the Codes "Give Care" (to help, support, or assist)

Code	Total % of compacts N = 175	Elementary school N = 120	Middle school N = 18	High school N = 37	Caucasian N = 134	Black N = 25	Hispanic N = 11
Parents to teachers (%)	94.86	94.17	100	94.59	94.78	96	90.91
Parents to students (%)	90.86	90.83	94.44	89.19	90.30	96	81.82
Students to parents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Students to teachers (%)	21.14	19.17	22.22	27.03	23.88	12	18.8
Teachers to parents (family) (%)	65.71	63.33	61.11	75.68	65.67	56	90.91
Teachers to students (%)	77.71	79.17	88.89	67.57	76.87	72	90.91

Appendix 2. Percentage of Compacts Including the Codes "Give To" (to impart, inform, bestow, or allow)

Code	Total % of compacts containing codes	Elementary school N = 120	Middle school N = 18	High school N = 37	Caucasian N = 134	Black N = 25	Hispanic N = 11
Parents to teachers (%)	5.71	1.6	11.11	16.22	5.22	8	9.09
Parents to students (%)	89.14	89.17	94.44	86.49	88.81	96	72.73
Students to teachers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Students to parents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers to parents (family) (%)	76	74.17	77.78	81.08	75.37	80	72.73
Teachers (%)	65.14	61.67	77.78	70.27	64.18	68	72.73

Appendix 3. Percentage of Compacts Including the Codes "Give In" (to obey, defer, or submit)

Code	Total % of compacts N = 175 (%)	Elementary school N = 120 (%)	Middle school N = 18 (%)	High school N = 37 (%)	Caucasian N = 134 (%)	Black N = 25 (%)	Hispanic N = 11 (%)
Students to teachers	81.14	80.00	100	75.68	80.60	76	90.91
Students to parents	53.72	52.5	61.11	54.04	50.75	68	54.55

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Part II
Minority and Immigrant Parent Engagement

Chapter 4
Learning in Schools and Homes: Successes and Complications in Bringing Minority Parents into Conversation with Their Children's School

John Ippolito

Abstract This paper reports on a university/school board collaborative outreach program hosted by a linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse elementary school in Toronto, Canada. The program facilitates a forum where the school's families—in conversation with in-service and pre-service teachers, the school's administration, a local university's faculty of education and community agencies—discuss issues the families deem important to their experience of public schooling. In addition to a detailed program overview, I present two tiers of participant feedback on the program, the first-tier gleaned from parent surveys and the second tier derived from a series of interviews conducted by parent researchers. Based on a consideration of the qualitative data emerging from this feedback, I offer three readings of the program: the first reading tells a story of how the program is empowering parents and caregivers and bringing them closer to their children's schooling; the second reading draws four implications that complicate the apparent successes of the program; and the third reading takes shape as a broader epistemic and ethical caution for action-oriented research of this sort.

Keywords Minority families · Parents · Literacy · Public education
Diversity · Communities · Elementary schools · Action research

In the fall of 2004, a large metropolitan school board in the Greater Toronto Area selected a number of inner city schools as exemplars for their respective cluster of high needs families facing pronounced social and economic challenges. The selection

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panel included school board staff, parents, trustees, community agencies, two local universities, and the provincial Ministry of Education. In the first phase of the initiative in 2006–2007, the committee selected three schools based on their demonstrated potential for exploring innovative teaching and learning practices; for supporting the social, emotional, and physical well being of students; for offering their school as the heart of a community; and for committing to research, review, and evaluation of educational practices. The program I discuss in this paper is part of a response by one of these schools, *Northfield* (a pseudonym), to its role as exemplar.

Northfield Public School is culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse. At the time of the initiative, the school had a student population of 532 children from Kindergarten to Grade 5. While some of the school's families have lived in the surrounding neighborhood for as long as 10–15 years, most of its families are recent immigrants to Canada, having lived in government-subsidized highrise apartments near the school for less than five years. In some cases, recent arrivals use the community as a transition point before moving on to another part of the city or province. In this sense, the school has to deal with a transient school population.

The school's diverse population shares a common set of experiences shaped by recent immigration, poverty and the challenges of linguistic and cultural minority status. However, the population is also marked by stark differences. Linguistically, as many as 20 languages other than English are spoken by children at home. In the 1970s, Northfield consisted primarily of Italian and Spanish-speaking families. Today, some of the predominant minority languages spoken by families at home include Vietnamese, Somali, Punjabi, Urdu, Tamil, and Spanish. Tracing these languages back to their geographic and national origins, many of the school's families are originally from Vietnam, Somalia, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Central and South America.

These linguistic differences mirror other profound distinctions, among them religion and ethnicity. In the case of religion, the main groups represented include Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. As for ethnicity, the school paints a very complex picture. For example, even within the same country of origin, for example, Vietnam, one finds subgroups of ethnic Vietnamese, Chinese, and Khmer. These ethnic differences can also be further mirrored in levels of education. For instance, some parents and caregivers coming from rural, farming backgrounds have limited elementary-level education (in some cases to the point of being functionally illiterate in their first language), while others, often from urban areas, have completed university degrees and have worked in professional fields such as law and corporate administration.

The program I address in this chapter facilitates a forum where participating parents and caregivers discuss issues they consider important to their families' experience of public schooling. In addition to parents and their children, the discussions also involve in-service and pre-service teachers, the school's administration, York University's Faculty of Education, and local community agencies. Before moving on to give a more detailed sense of how this extracurricular program works, I will situate it in a wider research-based context.

Research-Based Context

The program at Northfield, which I will refer to as *Learning in Schools and Homes*, is part of a broader response to the increasingly diverse demographic of North American society, in particular its urban centers. Within this response, educational critics have called for an elaboration of pedagogies, programs, and thinking in relation to linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse students. The key role played by families and communities in the education of such students is central to this proposed elaboration. For instance, in the area of classroom practices, it has been suggested that in matching students' background knowledge with lessons, teachers need to expand their *own* knowledge of their students' cultural and class-based experiences (McIntyre, Rosebery, & González, 2001); in the area of teacher education, there is a call for culturally responsive teachers who know about the lives of their students and design instruction that builds on what students already know (Villegas & Lucas, 2002); and in the area of language and literacy acquisition and situated learning, educational researchers have urged schools to pursue pedagogies where multilingual families can be community partners in their children's education (Abrams & Taylor Gibbs, 2000; Blackledge, 2001; Klingner et al., 2005; Lawson, 2003; McCaleb, 1994; Schecter & Cummins, 2003; Williams & Gregory, 2001). Among the benefits identified in such approaches are the overcoming of barriers to communication and increased parent confidence when offering input to educators and supplementary educational support to their children. Teachers, too, it is argued, begin to change as they move closer to their students' lived experience of society and community (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998) and recognize the multiple benefits of parent participation, developing an image of parents as effective participants in their children's education (Sherri, 2006).

Learning in Schools and Homes is grounded in a discourse of diversity and, notwithstanding a forthcoming publication (Ippolito, 2015) where I examine multiple competing discourses at play in this research, for the present study the discourse of diversity remains a singular reference point. In this regard, the starting point and direction for the program is derived from two of the core concerns which define the literature on education in the context of diversity, that is, a focus on improved student achievement (Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008) and a focus on more equitable relationships between families and schools (Axelrod, 2005; Kainz & Aikens, 2007; Poplin & Rivera, 2005).

Preparing for the Program

In setting the groundwork for the program, the research team—which included a lead teacher from Northfield, two graduate student research assistants from the Faculty of Education at York University, and myself (the university-based researcher)—generated ideas on logistics and arrangements, for example, how we

would advertise the program to the parents, how many weeks it would run, and which grade levels we would target. We further speculated on what issues or ideas parents might be interested in discussing. On this last point, we were aware of our role as facilitators and, for that reason, did not presume to know what the parents would want to discuss. As a research team, we focused on providing a forum for parent-driven conversations, a forum where parents would feel comfortable in discussing issues regarding their children's school or the provincial school system or, if parents were newcomers to Canada, in discussing information that we could provide to help make their transition into Canadian society easier.

During the 2006–2007 academic year, *Learning in Schools and Homes* took place from 3.30 to 5.00 p.m. on one afternoon per week. For parents picking up their children after school, this time slot became an important issue since parents wanted their children to eat and rest at the end of the school day. In response to this, and also to provide a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, each of the sessions began with a full, hot meal, respecting dietary needs such as Halal or vegetarian, during which all the research participants of all ages sat at the same table and ate and talked.

The research team's behind-the-scenes preparation meetings took place every week and involved finding printed or audio–visual materials which were related to the weekly focus *and* available in parents' home languages—languages which were identified in the first session. For example, serving as a primary resource and as an outline for many of our discussions, we used translated documents from *Settlement.Org* (http://settlement.org/translated-information/). A key advantage of using these documents is that by distributing reading materials in the families' home languages, we sent the message that first languages are *resources*, following Ruiz's (1984) notion of linguistic diversity as *resource*. These materials typically triggered other discussions within our sessions and, in keeping with our role as facilitators, the research team let these discussions take their course. For example, one particular session began with a discussion of a document explaining the process by which students were to be registered in their local schools. However, in response to the parents' concerns, it evolved into a conversation on the potentially problematic nature of mandatory child immunization in contexts of religious diversity.

Another key aspect of the team's preparation meetings involved setting up activities for the children. Parents were encouraged to bring any or all of their children to the sessions. Childcare was provided for younger children, and the older children worked with one of Northfield's teachers on activities that complemented the adults' activities. Toward the end of each session the children joined their parents and shared the activity they had been working on. It is also worth noting that, as in the adult sessions, the teacher working with the children made efforts to incorporate students' first languages into the activities.

Initiating the Program

The first block of six sessions was held in the Fall term of 2006 and was geared toward Junior and Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1, while the second block of five sessions was held in the Winter term of 2007 and aimed at Grades 2 and 3. A further block of four sessions for families of Grade 4 and 5 students was held in late Spring.

By the end of the first block of sessions, the program had generated sufficient interest and curiosity within the school such that 15 to 20 parents typically attended. And while English remained the common language of exchange, since the parent group spoke multiple languages, parents were encouraged to sit with other parents with whom they shared a common language. In this way, informal translation between and consultation among minority language speakers was enabled. Additionally, where possible, information sheets related to discussion topics were distributed in English and minority languages. Topics addressed in the sessions included the following: a discussion of the broad contours of *the education system in Ontario*, which, as explained above, evolved into a conversation on the potentially problematic nature of mandatory child immunization; *parent–teacher interviews*, which included the screening and discussion of a multilingual video modeling what a typical parent–teacher interview (or conference) can look like; *equity policies and practice*, which included a frank exchange of perspectives between school and families on what *equity* can mean; *getting involved with the school*, which included a sharing of views among parents who do and do not take part in school activities; *community academic supports*, during which we invited representatives from the local library and homework clubs to share resources with parents; *why is Northfield not K-8?*, which took shape as a conversation around the institutional history connected to particular grade distributions in the school board and the parents' concerns around risks students face in transitioning from junior to middle school; *the importance of arts education*, which involved the art and music teachers visiting to share with parents some of their classroom practices and also to hear from the parents their thoughts on the arts in education; and, finally, a session focused on *authority and learning*.

Recognizing the potentially controversial nature of this last topic, and being in a position to draw on the culture of discussion we had begun to establish with the parents, we used this particular session to share information and views with parents and to learn about their concerns regarding discipline. On this last point, we learned that while these parents agreed that discipline and rules are important at an early time in children's development, they also felt the kind of discipline they expected from teachers was different from discipline at home because the classroom is a public forum, and they felt every effort should be made not to embarrass children in front of their peers. The parents also pointed out that, since parents know their children better than teachers, teachers need to know what is going on at home and vice versa.

Notwithstanding the research team's facilitative role, we did allow ourselves to take part in the discussions by contributing ideas and views. In the discussion on *authority and learning*, a member of the research team talked about his own experience as a parent and teacher and his concerns when first moving to Canada at a

young age. He discussed variations in how discipline can be viewed and posed the question, *how can we discipline respectfully?* Part of the parent response was the suggestion that new teachers should have teacher mentors who guide them through issues such as discipline.

At this particular session, the children's activities consisted of creating a role play in which the children simulated a situation where one child is left out of playing with their peers and hence "behaves badly." The children performed this roleplay for the adults and then talked about alternative responses to the situation, why the other kids were being mean, and what they would do if it happened to them.

These sessions with Northfield's families have been highly suggestive for the potential impact of this type of community engagement in education. And here the term *community engagement* signals the deliberate attempt to both draw members of the broader community closer to their children's schools *and* pull the school into the sphere of the broader community—its perspectives, its concerns, its expectations—with a view to how it can inform school practice. For example, while the positive response of parents to our program is visible in their written end-of-year feedback (discussed below), there is also a multiplicity of areas where such an initiative can increase interaction in the school and community. For instance, for participating parents who are already active in the community, *Learning in Schools and Homes* is a vehicle for dialogue with the greater parent community. Such parent leaders encouraged their fellow parents not only to take part in the *Learning in Schools and Homes* program but also to take an active role in shaping the school culture.

As a former English as a second language (ESL) student, one of our research team members recalled some of the difficulties for both himself and his parents in adjusting to a new schooling and cultural environment, but he also noted the progress that has been made to accommodate the sociocultural, linguistic and religious needs of families. In particular, the session on community academic supports (when we invited representatives from the local library and homework clubs to share resources with parents) offered a reminder of some of the barriers that may yet be in place for parents—such as not being able to participate meaningfully in report card conferences because of the absence of interpreters and the eventual communication gap between the school and home. Our research team member who had himself been an ESL student explained to parents that, by contrast, there are now useful resources available to the program parents and, indeed, to parents of the school more generally, resources such as a translated video on parent–teacher interviews or interpreters made available for report card conferences. Situated as it is within these more recent practices, the *Learning in Schools and Homes* program has the potential for furthering collaborative partnerships between the home and school.

As for documenting the sessions, the primary data collection tool consisted of fieldnotes taken by the principal investigator and graduate assistants. The working assumption in this decision was the sense that fieldnotes would be less intrusive than audio or video recording. This was a crucial consideration since putting parents at ease and gaining their trust was central to the program.

First-Tier Feedback: Year-End Survey

As a further data collection tool, at the end of each block of sessions we invited parents to complete, anonymously, a written questionnaire which asked them to comment on various aspects of the program. Parents provided feedback in the language of their choice, and the research team translated these responses into English. The parent responses give us a sense of (1) the relevance of material provided to parents in their home languages; (2) the parents' view of the children's activities; and (3) the parents' overall impression of the program.

We begin with the importance parents place on the materials provided in their home languages, since this was something they seemed keen to highlight. One of the parents in the Fall block wrote, "yes, it's important to provide the information translated in home languages because with this parents who have problems with English in reading can involve themselves in school activities." Another parent from the Fall block writes, in Spanish, "the translated documents helped us to grasp the true meaning of the topic being delivered. I was happy to know you have translated copies of the material for discussion." A third parent, from the Winter block, adds, "it's important to translate information in some home languages because with this most of the parents who have problems with English can understand easily and give their views."

The second area where we solicited parent views was on activities their children took part in while they, the parents, took part in the adult discussions. Parents provided us with the following feedback: "I was very impressed with the activities that the children engaged in while we were in session. I was impressed when children from different backgrounds sang in Spanish." A second parent, this one from the Winter block, remarked, "I like the activities very much, especially the ones for the children because they develop their creativity and imagination. I like to hear the children sing or recite, because when they do, one can enjoy the quality of the work they do."

Finally, when asked about their overall impression of the program, a parent from the Winter block writes, in Spanish, "all the topics seemed interesting; they helped in informing us of all the kinds of support provided for kids and their parents." A parent from the Fall block writes, "it was helpful to have the interaction with other parents. The facilitators did quite well at making the sessions feel like the parents were leading the discussions. It truly was a discussion, not a presentation or workshop."

A last point of consideration in both planning for and trying to understand the dynamics of our program deals with parents' different ways of learning or expressing their views. This is the case of silences in some of our sessions, where some parents simply did not speak out or express an opinion. I am reminded here of Pon, Goldstein, and Schecter's (2003) point that "modes of silences can be enabling or debilitating depending on individuals' situations and circumstances" (p. 117). In this article, Pon and his colleagues point to the lack of research on the role and significance of silence and silences (2003, p. 116). Although their study focuses on students, we may be able to extrapolate the significance and legitimacy for parents, too, of all

modes of communication as well as ways of knowing and learning when designing and implementing programs such as *Learning in Schools and Homes*.

At the outset of the program, our planning team was unanimous in its desire *not* to facilitate a program premised on a deficit view of minority languages, minority cultures and minority families. Our starting premise was that the minority families in the school were *already* inscribed in complex social ways and that these inscriptions—ways of being, ways of thinking, ways of interacting, ways of worshipping—are of enormous potential value to their children's experience of public schooling, provided these differences are understood *as* resources by the school, by the school board, and, indeed, by the very community agencies set up to assist them. In order for us to use the after-school sessions as an incubator for the view that the families' differences are in fact resources, we deliberately avoided a unidirectional, top-down presentation format and encouraged a conversational, dialogic format. Logistically, it has proven workable; interpersonally, it has proven to be an effective means of fostering meaningful conversation with parents; and conceptually, it holds the promise of furthering notions of community involvement in education. For a *top-ten list* of suggestions for facilitating this kind of program, see Ippolito's (2012) *Bringing marginalized parents and caregivers into their children's schooling*.

Second-Tier Feedback: Peer-Research

In addition to the parent surveys at the end of the first year of *Learning in Schools and Homes*, I was keen to augment this feedback with a second, retrospective look at the program. As for how to access participants' perspectives on the first year of the program, I thought it appropriate that the method reiterate the community-referenced ethos of the program itself. With this in mind, in 2007–2008 I drew upon parents and caregivers from the school community as peer-researchers. My assumption was that linguistic and cultural minority parents and caregivers would be more at ease and more forthcoming if they were interviewed by other linguistic and cultural minority parents and caregivers, people with whom they shared some of the same challenges—linguistically, culturally, socially, and socioeconomically.[1]

Toward this end, I invited three parents and caregivers (two of whom were new to the school) to interview seven parents and caregivers who had taken part in the program the previous year. One of the parent researchers, who speaks Spanish and English, conducted her three interviews entirely in Spanish with three Spanish-speaking parents who had been given the option of Spanish or English or both. A second parent researcher, who speaks Somali and English, conducted two interviews entirely in English, one with an interviewee who speaks English as a primary language and another who speaks Somali as a primary language. (I later discovered this parent researcher chose to avoid the use of Somali, her home language, because

[1]The work of these parent-research teams, specifically as they investigated the issue of *discipline*, is elaborated in Ippolito (2010a).

she did not feel confident in her first language literacy skills for the purposes of translation.) The third researcher speaks Vietnamese and Chinese and English and interviewed a pair of women who chose to be interviewed as a pair and in Vietnamese. As it turned out, this third cluster of interviews became difficult, and I will address this in some detail.

As for the selection of participants, I deferred in large part to the recommendations of my on-site research project coordinator who is also the school's adult education teacher. She was instrumental in recommending three potential peer researchers and in recruiting potential interviewees. As for the interviewers, the coordinator and I opted for three women who we thought met the following four criteria: one, they were interested in talking about the after-school program; two, they had the language skills to conduct interviews in a minority home language and English; three, we thought they would stand to benefit from taking part; that is, they would potentially strengthen their own interpersonal and language skills; and four, they were willing to consider a longer-term role as researchers in future peer research at the school. (As it turned out, two of the three parent researchers joined the parent-research team for 2008–2009.)

As for the interviewees, we opted for seven parents and caregivers who, first and foremost, we were able to contact—this is always a challenge in schools with high mobility. We also looked for parents who had taken part in most of the previous year's after-school discussions.

The interviews were conducted in a small office adjacent to other administrative offices in the school. They were guided by a set of open-ended questions focused around the previous year's program (see the Appendix for the Spanish version of the interview protocol). The interviews varied from 15 to 45 min in length, and they were audiotaped. The recordings were translated (when required) and transcribed in their entirety. All of the participants, both interviewers and interviewees, were paid through a Faculty of Education minor research grant.

As I read and reflected on the transcripts, I knew it would not be difficult to use the findings to tell a story of how the program is empowering parents and caregivers and bringing them closer to their children's schooling. For example, as a general response to the program, one of the parents offered the following: "I can more effectively express myself, and also I can participate in the education of the children … like any parent I want that the situations are good, that there is security, and that the children are put in first priority." Another Spanish speaker remarked, "the sessions were good because all the topics that they proposed were excellent … I have liked what I've heard, and they have all been good." A third minority language parent explained, "I liked the fact that I could practice and listen to others speaking English, which motivated me to put in an effort to understand what they were saying. So to a certain extent, I was able to practice my English as well as at the same time learn about how the system works in this country." And in response to a question which asked them to describe what *they* thought the program was about, a mother who is herself a student in the school's Adult Education class claimed that "the purpose was to make the education better, to make the programs better, and so the parents can develop a better relationship with the children and their teachers." One of her classmates in the Adult Education class added, "I wanted to learn more about the school. I wanted to

meet more people, and I also wanted to know more about the programs." Another mother, a native speaker of English and Bengali who went on to complete a teacher education program, reflected, "partly to get parents more involved in the school, to understand how the school system works so that they would feel more comfortable coming to the school and being involved with the school. Um, yeah, I think that was sort of the purpose."

On the issue of relationships with other parents and caregivers, a young Spanish-speaking woman said, "I did not know anyone who attended those meetings, and so it was good that we compared our ways of life and exchanged ideas and stories of our experiences as well as suggestions for improvements." She added, "well, yes, I did see that the relationships were closer between attendees. For example, there was a Vietnamese girl that came over to my house whose name I can't remember right now, but since we were both attendees of the program we were able to converse and talk more." These sentiments were echoed by another young woman who pointed out, "it was helpful. There were a lot of things that I learned and that the parents I think learned, and it was nice to be with each other and, you know, have a stronger sense of the parental community at the school."

The program's successes can also be evidenced by instances in the interviews where the participants showed signs of taking ownership. For example, in response to a request for suggestions for future sessions, two of the participants made specific suggestions. The first participant, highlighting her own ongoing challenges, explained, "I am currently going through a difficult situation due to immigration. Things have happened to me that because of not knowing … I would like that we would touch upon this topic so that people don't go through the same problems that I am currently going through." The second participant made specific recommendations for the program's method:

> so the main thing is that there maintains this continuity so that no topic is forgotten, every two weeks or, rather, every week is too close, maybe the meetings could happen once every twenty days or once a month or something like that so that the continuity is maintained and so that one does not miss the *line* of what is being discussed.

In contrast to this first set of remarks, two further strands in the interviews need to be addressed in that they complicate the apparent successes of the program. The first of these two countercurrents may suggest parent and caregiver dependency rather than agency, that is, parents and caregivers as passive, or at least not fully empowered, recipients of information or direction. A Tamil-speaking participant confided, "the true purpose [of the program] I think was bringing information to let us know where we can go, how we should educate our children and (long pause) how we can integrate ourselves to the Canadian community." A further sampling of views representing a cross-section of linguistic and cultural backgrounds on this issue reiterates what may be a passive ingesting of information and instruction: "[the purpose of the program] is to see where they [the program facilitators] could help us and know more about how we can educate our children;" "I know that with this type of class, one feels more oriented and knowledgeable on how to raise their kids on the right path;" "[the program is about] the help it offers us and the information it provides us."

At this juncture, having identified this first countercurrent in the data, it is very much worth considering the question of whether every parent seeks *agency* vis-à-vis their child's school in the ways Western educators might envision. In other words, it is important to think carefully about the motivations and rationales and ways of life within which the parents in this study may not have assumed the opportunity to increase their own agency. Some of the parents' responses may reflect culturally influenced attitudes toward teachers and schools; that is, that one learns from them rather than negotiates mutual relationships with them. Clearly, institutional relationships are construed differently, depending on one's own history, culture, personal experiences, socioeconomics, and so forth.

In this regard, the point of weighing the findings on this issue is not only to explore potential parent and caregiver dependency—rather than agency—but to draw into question the very research perspective which deems this parent preference as *dependency* in the first place. This double-edged caution is directed, then both at the parents' responses and the researcher's interpretation of those responses. It is also in the spirit of co-evolving how *all* the participants think about family-school relations. I will return to this sentiment in the concluding section.

The second of these two countercurrents that complicate the apparent successes of the program are expressed as dissatisfaction or concern. I will touch on three of these instances. In the first case, one of the participants, after she had praised the program for pulling the parents closer to the school, shared a suggestion for the kind of topic that the program might address in the future—a topic emerging from a difficult incident. She relates,

> Some [topics] are very difficult to discuss … like the other day, my nephew from Mexico came to visit and went to go play at the park, and a few other children of color spit on him, to which the mother asked, "what exactly can I do about this even though I don't speak the language?" Also, the child is already starting to feel a sense of resentment toward children of color due to their attitudes. As a result, this may spark the development of something bad. So, one topic of discussion could be how to integrate children of different cultures.

The same participant, in commenting about an incident at one of the sessions, explained,

> There was one instance in which something happened that I did not like. It was related to the food that was brought … I think they said that there was chicken for the Muslims since they weren't allowed to eat any meat. So, practically, it was like this food was unable to be touched since it was only allowed for these types of people. These little types of differences *are not right* … for some people it will not matter if they eat Halal meat so they should just buy Halal for everyone or simply just buy everyone the same thing.

This aspect of how the participants related to the program and to each other received a more pronounced expression in the case of the Vietnamese-speaking peer-researcher and the pair of Vietnamese-speaking parents—two mothers of children attending the school. According to my on-site coordinator, who was helping to facilitate the interviews, the interview never really took place since the conversation between interviewer and interviewees began and ended with a heated exchange around preliminaries. In an attempt to understand what actually happened, I spoke with my on-site coordinator privately and then with the Vietnamese-speaking peer-researcher. In

private, my on-site coordinator suggested that the interviewees felt the woman who had been chosen had no right to be asking them questions. This was even after the interviewees had been given the relevant background details in preparation for the interview. My coordinator further claimed that interviewer and interviewees spoke different varieties of Vietnamese, had very differing levels of education, and that the interviewer came from an urban background while the interviewees were from a rural area. When I spoke to the interviewer, she was reticent and chose only to tell me that the interviewees did not speak Vietnamese very well, nor did they speak Chinese very well. (I later established that all three Vietnamese-speaking participants were ethnic Chinese.)

As for the *real reasons* why the interview did not take place, one might intuit from the scenario outlined above that the two parents being interviewed did not trust the parent interviewer or perhaps they perceived her role as interviewer conferred a higher status they did not want to acknowledge. The fact interviewees and interviewers shared the same ethno-linguistic background (Vietnamese-speaking ethnic Chinese) may have exacerbated the resistance of the interviewees to the interviewer's role.

This second-tier feedback, accessed via parent researchers, provides further insights into the program. By way of summary, I extract, suggestively rather than definitively, the four following observations:

- The minority parents in this study are acutely concerned with their children's experience of public schooling, with their own learning and sense of agency as adults, and with their relationships with other adults in the school community.
- Programs or initiatives meant to foster agency among minority parents and caregivers may not actually do so. In fact, some parents and caregivers may respond to such initiatives in passive and receptive ways.
- Difficult issues around intra- and inter-racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic relations should not be ignored in school-based programs, even those with benign titles such as our own *Learning in Schools and Homes*.
- Adults do not necessarily feel more comfortable interacting with other adults with whom they share linguistic and/or cultural experiences. While in some cases a rapport can be enabled by this matching, in other cases it can be a source of friction.

Conclusion and Conceptual Caution

The discussion forum at Northfield proved to be a worthwhile space for parents to connect with their children's school. The parents found it useful in a number of areas: it allowed them to hear and to be heard by teachers and administrators; it provided them opportunities for linking with other parents; and it introduced them to broader educational practices shaping their children's experience of public schooling. Analysis of feedback on the program, from both year-end surveys and follow-up parent-driven interviews, also revealed that the interactions facilitated by the program

are not insulated from the broader social and interpersonal dynamics at play between and among parents. In this sense, the program must be prepared to take up, discuss, and learn from these dynamics—dynamics not immune from the tensions that also characterize the community within which the program is situated.

In this vein, I will conclude with a conceptual caution that lends some sense of the broad epistemic and ethical concerns that can be read into this program. For a discussion of ethical concerns as they link specifically to minority languages in mainstream Canadian schools, see Ippolito (2010b), *Ethics and teacher practices in linguistic minority classrooms*.

In commenting on the place of reform efforts in curriculum studies, Smits (2008) cautions against a preoccupation with *improving methods*. This caution is equally valid in applied research programs such as *Learning in Schools and Homes.* This work, focused as it is on *improving* school–family relations, particularly in the case of minority families, does run the risk, as Smits points out in reference to the French philosopher Alain Badiou, of improving the methods of existence without considering the conditions of existence. Glossed in the context of *Learning in Schools and Homes*, the risk can be read as one where *improving* school–family relations carries on without considering the conditions of possibility for those relations in the first place. In this scenario, applied work can indeed turn instrumentalist and normative: an instrument for pulling school practices toward a normative point, that may, admittedly, be more democratic and responsive. But the concern I am raising here does not devalue the importance of either democracy or responsibility. It does signal that the conditions of possibility for democracy and responsibility (not to mention authoritarianism and irresponsibility) have to be integral to the discussion forums and to the research around it. This is not to say the only alternative to democracy and responsibility is authoritarianism and irresponsibility. Taking responsibility, for instance, may look very different in different cultural contexts. Following this caution, both the discussion forums and attendant research need to be open to nuanced, complex, and perhaps counterintuitive (to a Western perspective) understandings of self and society, particularly as they manifest themselves in educational contexts.

It is for this reason in particular that I insist, both in my reports to funding agencies and in my strategizing with school-based research teams and their wider school communities, that *Learning in Schools and Homes* and the research tied to it is meant not only to effect changes in how families and schools interact, but also to effect changes in how all the participants think about community engagement with schools. In a nutshell, I insist on allowing the research to surprise us about family-school relations, certainly, but also to surprise us about ourselves: how we experience the world and how we think about it.

Appendix. Questionario de Preguntas (Interview Questions)

1. Siustedasistióal "Programa de Aprendizaje en Casa y Escuela," podríadecir-nos cuantas veces tuvo la oportunidad de participar en el? (How many times did you attend the *Learning in Schools and Homes* program last year?)
2. Son sus hijos alumnos es esta escuela? Si es así, participaron ellos junto a usted en el programa? (Did your children attend this school last year? If so, did they attend the program with you?)
3. Que le animo a usted a participar en este programa? (Why did you attend the program?)
4. Podríadecirnoscualfueelpropósitodeesteprograma? (What did you think the purpose of this program was?)
5. Tuvo la oportunidad de aprender algo nuevo en este programa? (Did you learn anything from the program?)
6. Piensa usted que este programa le ayudo a ver como se desarrolla la edu-cación de sus hijos, y como se desenvuelve la escuela a que ellos asisten? (Did the program change anything about how you think about your children's education or the school they attend?)
7. Piensa usted que la participación de los padres en el programa, pueda haber producido un efecto positivo entre ellos? (Did the program have any effect on your relationship with other parents in the school?)
8. Que piensa usted que se debería hacer o cambiar para mejorar el programa? (What could be done to improve the program?)
9. Desearía asistir a otras reuniones como estas posteriormente? Si o No? (Will you be attending the program this year? Why or why not?)
10. Hay algo mas que usted desearía agregar o preguntar? (Is there anything else we haven't talked about that you would like to add?)

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Chapter 5
Parental Responsibilization: Involving "Immigrant Parents" in Swedish Schools

Magnus Dahlstedt

Abstract This chapter examines how public sector officials and school staff in a multi-ethnic suburb in Stockholm understands collaboration between schools and parents. According to officials and school staff, what is the value of collaboration between schools and parents? How are the main problems and challenges in involving parents defined? What solutions are offered to these problems and challenges? How are parents constructed as subjects? Both principals and teachers employed two main lines of arguments in their talk about the collaboration between schools and parents, with the one focusing on the parents' language and culture, and the other on the parents' social exclusion. These lines of arguments provide different ways of understanding parents' relations with the school, at the same time as they come together in representing the *family* as the main cause of a range of social problems.

Keywords Immigrants · Partnership · Ethnicity · Governmentality
Parenting · Exclusion

Introduction

In recent years, the notion of *partnership* has been hailed as a new form of organization throughout the world (Elander, 2002). Since the late 1980s, Swedish educational policy has stressed that schools should be run through cooperation between teachers, parents, students and other actors in the local community (Dahlstedt, 2009; Jarl, 2005). In this context, the role of parents as active partners in relation to the school has become an ever more crucial issue. In Sweden, as well as in many other countries, it has been emphasized that parents can no longer be looked upon and treated as an educational *problem* to be "dealt with" by the school. Parents should rather be looked upon and treated as a valuable *resource* in the project of fostering the citizens of tomorrow (cf. SOU, 1997: 121).

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In order to understand the ways in which partnerships between parents and schools are actually initiated, it is important to further investigate the particular conceptions and representations of the world developed within the school system (Crozier, 2001). How are the responsibilities of teachers, pupils and parents, and their respective roles in relation to education, represented? And how are the expectations of different parents reflected in the treatment of parents from different backgrounds? If parents are expected to be passive and incompetent observers, the conditions for parents to actually be involved as active partners collaborating with schools are not the most auspicious. If on the other hand parents are expected to play an active role, as a competent and equal partner, this creates significantly better conditions for a more active participation on the part of parents (Wilson Cooper & Christie, 2005).

This chapter looks at how public sector officials and school staff in a multi-ethnic suburb in Stockholm understands collaboration between schools and parents. According to officials and school staff, what is the value of collaboration between schools and parents? How are the main problems and challenges in involving parents defined? What solutions are offered to these problems and challenges? How are parents constructed as subjects? Both principals and teachers employed two main lines of arguments in their talk about the collaboration between schools and parents, with the one focusing on the parents' language and culture, and the other on the parents' social exclusion. These lines of arguments provide different ways of understanding parents' relations with the school, at the same time as they come together in representing the *family* as the main cause of a range of social problems.

The chapter is based on material collected in the course of fieldwork conducted in the multi-ethnic suburb of Sandå, in Stockholm. The district is comprised of three smaller areas characterized by quite different conditions. The most marked dividing line is found between Sandå itself and Strandhagen. Although these two areas are located next to one another geographically, the living conditions are highly unequal. Sandå is dominated by middle- and high-income residents. The housing stock is largely comprised of tenant ownership and owner-occupied homes. The level of unemployment is low, whereas the levels of educational achievement and electoral participation are high.

By contrast, when Strandhagen is referred to in the media, it is most often in relation to conflicts and social problems such as youth violence, trouble at school and poor school results. Strandhagen is dominated by low-income households. The housing stock is almost completely comprised of rented accommodation. The housing is often poorly maintained, unemployment is high and the level of educational achievement is considerably lower than in Sandå. The level of electoral participation is among the lowest in the whole of Stockholm. Migration away from the area is very high and the proportion of residents with a foreign background is substantially higher than in Sandå.

Fieldwork was comprised of both participant observations and in-depth interviews with members and representatives from local associations, politicians and public officials, parents and pupils. The chapter is based primarily on interviews conducted with twenty public officials on an everyday basis working in "the frontline", in relation to parents. In addition to officials working at the family centre, in schools,

school administration and social services, a total of three school principals and twenty teachers working at three schools in Sandå were also interviewed. Fieldwork was primarily conducted in Strandhagen.[1]

The analysis follows the main lines of argument in the interviews. These lines of argument comprise a range of, quite often conflicting, discursive elements, metaphors and symbols (Billig, Gane, Condor, Middleton, & Edwards, 1988). The analysis focuses particularly on those discursive elements—categorisations, markers and metaphors—creating similarity and dissimilarity, proximity and distance, between different parents and different types of parenting. However, before moving on to look at the way officials on the "frontline" talk about parents and parenting, school and collaboration, the next section briefly presents the theoretical framework of the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

As noted above, there is a strong will in Swedish education policy to support and make use of the engagement and initiative of the family, both within and outside the school. However, some parents are not as resourceful as others. While some families are constructed as "functioning normally" with parents being capable of "taking responsibility" for the well-being of their children, others are constructed as atypical and problematic (Gleichmann, 2004). When it comes to the category of "immigrant parents", for instance, not *all* parents are apparently as resourceful, as certain parents are regarded as a "problem" in their encounters with the school (Bunar, 2001; Ranson, Martin, & Vincent, 2004; Vincent, 2000).

Thus, the seemingly unproblematic category of "parents" has to be critically investigated (Crozier, 2001). How is the ideal "normal parent" actually constructed? Representations of parents and their relations with schools reflect certain ways of conceptualizing an "ideal parent". In order to analyse the construction of such ideals, the theoretical point of departure for the chapter is an understanding of governing and the construction of citizen-subjects inspired by the works of Michel Foucault.

According to Foucault (1991), governing is to be understood as a series of rationalities including conceptions about not only the limits of policies, reasonable ambitions and the specific tasks of public agencies, but also about the target, object or subject of these policies (Dean, 1991; Rose, 1996). Following Foucault, several scholars have noted that today's society is shaped to a large extent by neoliberal governmental rationalities. According to Rose (1996: 41), for instance, we are today living in an "advanced liberal society", which "does not seek to govern through "society", but through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now constructed as subjects of

[1]Two of the schools where fieldwork was conducted, Sandå and Strandhaga, lie in the two areas described earlier. Both include pupils from preschool age to year nine (aged 15–16), predominantly drawn from among residents in their respective areas. The third school, Öberga, lies halfway between Sandå and Strandhagen. This school includes pupils from preschool age to year 5 drawn from both areas.

choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfilment". Governing involves constant *responsibilization*, the creation of "responsible citizens" who take charge of the entire course of their lives (from education and work, politics and housing, to family and leisure activities) on the basis of their *own* ideals, circumstances and ambitions. Thus, governing operates not only in specific places or institutional settings, such as schools, for example, but rather throughout the entire social field.

Such a perspective has also been related to issues of parenting and the initiation of partnerships between schools and parents. In a Swedish context, Lee Gleichmann (2004: 257) argues that since the 1990s neoliberal notions of self-actualization and self-fulfilment have framed family and welfare policies: "The welfare of the family is now based to a large extent on the ability of family members to live up to the demand for self-regulation". Further developing the Foucauldian framework on governing in relation to parent involvement in school, Gill Crozier (1998: 126) claims that "in order to achieve a satisfactory partnership in the eyes of the teachers, they (the teachers) need to persuade parents, and through parents the pupils, to adapt their value system of what is means to be a 'good' parent and a 'good' pupil". Referring to Foucault, Crozier approaches partnerships between parents and school as an intricate form of governing, a kind of parental responsibilization whereby parents are included in the teachers' project of fostering pupils in line with the conventions of the schools. Accordingly, the inclusion of parents in partnerships with schools actually means that parents in some sense are to continually meet their obligations in accordance with the specific values constituting the framework within which the activities of the school take place (Keogh, 1996).

Problematizing Immigrants

What significance, then, does ascribed ethno-cultural background have when it comes to representing parents in terms of being the same or different, a resource or a problem, as a partner collaborating with the school? If we turn to Sweden, there are a number of studies of Swedish schools that have recently shown that certain "immigrant pupils" are depicted and treated in accordance with a *racializing logic*—particularly those categorized as non-Christian/non-Western (Gruber, 2007; Mulinari, 2007; Parszyk, 1999). It also appears that the treatment of parents is quite similar. In public discourses on the relations between school and parents, there is a range of stereotypical representations of the "immigrant parent" as a problem (Mulinari, 2007). Such representations were also encountered during fieldwork, where the alleged passivity and absence from school of "immigrant parents" was repeatedly emphasized by those interviewed, as constituting a serious problem for the schools.

These findings are also in line with both Swedish and international research noting how school staff tend to place the blame for children's school situation as well as for distant attitudes towards school among "immigrant parents". These parents are often regarded as authoritarian, disinterested, uninformed and "semi-lingual" (Bunar, 2001; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; McLaren, 2003; Runfors, 2003).

In the context of schools in multi-ethnic Sweden, Ann Runfors (2003, 2004) argues that "Swedish pupils" are those who in various ways constitute the model for what schools aim to achieve and "immigrant children" are moulded in relation to these. Runfors (2004, p. 49) notes that the daily pedagogic work has a range of paradoxical consequences: "The ideal of producing integration by levelling out social differences between individuals and groups became, in the name of goodwill, a question of eradicating differences in relation to 'Swedish children'". Teachers' work in relation to "immigrant children" is focused on "incorporating" them into an imagined national community, at the same time as they are assigned the role of "foreigners" within this community. The children are assigned to an existence in a kind of permanent limbo in which they are both included and excluded at the same time. Runfors (2003, 2004) argues that this limbo existence is created in the relationship with the home and the parents. She notes that parents' and home environments, particularly those that are not regarded as reflecting the dominant middle-class norm, are problematized. Teachers speak, for example, about certain pupils being "under-stimulated" because their parents work too much and have a lot of children. Such children are viewed as being more "badly brought up" and difficult for the teachers to teach.

As observed by Runfors (2003, 2004), it is not necessarily the "ethno-cultural background" that is defining the distinctiveness of the "immigrant parents". It is rather markers *other* than explicitly ethnic characteristics that are emphasized—such as "social competencies", "exclusion" and "gender equality". Such markers offer apparently self-evident explanations for complex social matters and challenges, legitimating certain interventions made in order to resolve the problems identified.

In research, categories such as ethnicity, immigrant, ethnic group and ethnic minority are too often used as *descriptive* categories. However, rather than being used as empirical facts, they need *themselves* to be analysed, as part of the continuous operations of power, where the world is given meaning by practices of naming and "othering", mapping and boundary-drawing (cf. Wetherell & Potter, 1992).[2] Furthermore, it is important to note that as a principle of social classification, "ethnicity" is part of a complex interplay of power relations—including among other things gender and class—which together, construct parents in relation to the norm of an "ideal parent(ing)". It may perhaps be possible to theoretically differentiate power relations and principles of classification for analytical purposes, but in everyday life categories such as ethnicity, gender and class have a concrete significance only in their relations to one another (cf. Villenas, 2001; Vincent, 2000).

[2]When the categories ethnicity, immigrants and Swedes appear in the chapter, inverted commas are hereafter used to indicate the problem of how different sections of the population are sorted according to predetermined categories. When the categories "immigrant parents" and "Swedish parents" are used, it reflects the popular expression of how the population in Sweden is divided into "us" and "them".

Linguistic and Cultural Deficits

Turning to the interviews, there were two primary lines of arguments regarding the topic of parent involvement: the first focusing on the parents' *language* and *culture*, the other on their *exclusion*. The most recurrent line of arguments in the interviews focused on the parents' language and culture. It involves a range of ideas about what characterizes an ideal and a problematic parent. All school principals emphasized the importance of treating both pupils and parents as individuals, rather than bearers of specific "cultures". It was particularly seen as important not to stigmatize "immigrants". At the same time, all informants differentiated between "Swedes" and "immigrants", "Swedish" and "non-Swedish". "Non-Swedish" parents were in several cases represented as having a range of difficulties in helping their children, not least with homework, in order to perform well in school.

According to one recurrent representation in the interviews, the parents are not capable of making a contribution to the children's schoolwork due to their lack of sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language, and of the way Swedish society in general, and the Swedish school system, in particular, functions. Another set of problems is related to "non-Swedish" parents as "bearers of cultures" that in important respects differ from that of the majority society. As it is "our culture" that constitutes the desirable normal condition, "other('s) cultures" are represented primarily in terms of a "deficiency", in terms of different ways of understanding—for instance—the family, relations between men and women, parenthood, education and the role of the school.

Johan, vice principal at Strandhaga school began our conversation by saying that on the whole, he was satisfied with the school's day-to-day contacts with parents. On the other hand, he said that the school experiences substantial difficulties in getting parents to participate in group information meetings. In those cases where there are difficulties in relation to contacts with individual parents, there are often various concerns in relation to the children concerned, he said. In these cases, there are most often problems in the family. Anders continued that it is also precisely those parents who are almost only ever contacted by the school in relation to some problem or other that are most difficult to involve in group meetings. However, he emphasized that this was not a question of ethnicity as such. Rather, it has more to do with the parents' socio-economic status. Highly educated "immigrant parents", he argued, have more in common with "Swedish parents" with a corresponding level of education than they do with less well-educated "immigrant parents".

As our conversation continued, however, vice principal Johan's arguments successively drifted towards factors that were more specifically ethnic or cultural, presented as self-evident explanations in discussing parenthood and collaborating with parents. As in several other interviews, the parents' language skills, and their different views of education, were seen as problems to this collaboration. Johan argues that in the countries of origin, discipline and order are the guiding principles in schools, whereas Sweden schools assign much greater personal responsibility for the learning process—to pupils as well as parents. Furthermore, many of the parents' language

difficulties were emphasized as a concrete challenge to collaborations between home and school. Those who do not feel secure in communicating with the school may feel difficult to take the initiative to contact the school.

The conversation with Johan is one illustration of the multifaceted narratives on parents, parenting and parental collaboration found in the interviews. The informants have their personal experiences and interpretations. However, in this diversity of views, there is a pattern; the parents' linguistic and cultural "deficiency"; the fact that they do not attend informational and parent meetings or involve themselves in the work of the school at all; *or* that they choose to involve themselves in a way that is perceived by the school as "bothersome". Parents are generally represented as having culturally determined points of view or demands, which they then convey in a "pushy" manner. Their demands are viewed as being incompatible with the usual conventions. Paradoxically, this means that parents risk being problematized both when they involve themselves in the school's work and when they do not. Here, "culture" is represented as "an obstacle to partnership" (Ålund, 1991). If this "obstacle" could be overcome, a well-functioning partnership could be developed.

The Metaphor of "Meeting of Cultures"

Although there were quite different ideas and proposals for how to improve the relations between parents and schools, all informants have a will to support and include the parents in the children's learning process. In many cases, the "meeting of cultures" was used, implicitly or explicitly, as a metaphor for discussing the involvement or parents. In several interviews, the informants expressed a desire for new types of meeting, routines and a different mode of address in communications with parents as a means of bringing about more "cultural meetings", in order to reach parents, rouse their enthusiasm and involve them in the work of the school.

Emma, a family therapist at the family centre in Strandhagen, was one of those explicitly referring to the metaphor of the cultural meeting. For several years, the family centre has run "family circles" for residents, in which groups of approximately ten parents are given the opportunity, on a voluntary basis and together with two family therapists, to learn about parenting in Sweden. Within the educational framework of the "study circle", a special educational programme is staged which, on the basis of an imagined "ideal parent", is intended to develop the "social skills" of the participants. They learn to be with others in a group setting, how people converse, present arguments, listen to one another, wait their turn, and control their temper. Thus, the circles function as a kind of forum for "democratic education". The rationale of the programme proceeds from the framework of *cognitive behavioural therapy*, CBT. The idea is to support "desirable behaviours" while "undesirable behaviours" are to be "extinguished" (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013). The objective of the circle is that the parents will make use of the same programme in their respective families and in doing so develop their children's "social skills". Similar programmes were practiced at all three of the schools that I visited in Sandå.

Even though one of the central principles of the programme is that of "reinforcing" certain "desirable" behaviours, in order to thereby encourage "undesirable" ones to gradually fade away, Emma nonetheless dwelt on a number of "problems" that she described as being specific to "immigrant families". In Emma's talk about parents and education, the distinction between "Swedish" and "non-Swedish" was emphasized as necessary in order to understand the conditions of parenting and education in a place like Strandhagen. The most critical "difference" between "immigrant" and "Swede", which Emma returned to repeatedly, relates to the view of authority within the family, with the family as the basis of "difference" in turn being linked to gender.

An overwhelming majority of the parents participating in the circles are women. This, Emma argued is due to the fact that many families in Strandhagen view raising children as "women's work". It would be tempting to link Emma's argument to a stereotypical conception of "the Muslim male", even though Emma did not herself explicitly make this connection. In many families, however, there still prevails a strongly authoritarian view of the family and family relations, both between the parents and between the parents and their children. Emma noted that this kind of authoritarian conception of family life has existed also in Sweden, albeit further in history. Emma argued that the fathers do not take responsibility for their children's development, as is the case in Sweden, often causing extensive family problems, for example in connection with divorces. In the case of divorce, she said, the fathers often choose either to "fight to the bitter end" over the children, in the most extreme cases kidnapping their children out of pure desperation, or to completely abandon them, remarry and possibly have new children. In both cases, the children are placed in a difficult situation.

Here in Sweden, she argued, there is a completely different way of looking at parenthood, with a third alternative being viewed as the most desirable, that is the possibility of the parents living apart but nonetheless sharing custody. But Sweden is individualistic, said Emma. In Strandhagen, many remain more collectivistic in the way they view the family and society:

> We're… If you look back at our own history… I'm quite old, of course. I can look back not only at my own, but also my mother's history. The view of the family and of women has evolved. If you look back fifty or a hundred years, then they're… there's… actually there's something that we ourselves recognise in this way of looking at things. Then of course there's this collective approach as well, in many groups… We're so incredibly individualistic in Sweden. It's about the individual and the little nuclear family. The nuclear family or the family is so much larger, the extended family, and it seems like everyone is related to everyone else…

Emma hesitated as she spoke. She halted time and again and then tried again. She seemed to be trying to find the right tone and the correct words to articulate her thoughts. Even though her argument is not entirely unambiguous, equality appears as a kind of marker for "Swedishness". At the same time, "Swedish" and "non-Swedish" are presented in a way indicating that "Swedes" are more developed than "them". "They" remain traditional, patriarchal, and tied to the collective. On the contrary, "Swedes" are modern individuals and sexual equals. The implication is clear: "they" should or will in time become more like "us" (cf. Mulinari, 2007).

The recurrent metaphor of the "meeting of cultures" is quite paradoxical as it differentiates between people by *stressing boundaries*, at the same time as it promotes a coming together in the idea of a *boundary-breaching dialogue*. According to this metaphor, people are represented primarily as bearers of cultures, with culture defined in singular terms—*one* culture. This means that crossing boundaries and the blending of cultures is defined in terms of problems. Participants in the "meeting of cultures" are represented as exchanging and conveying their respective cultures, as if these were given, homogeneous and static.

Excluded Parents

The second line of argument in the interviews focuses on *exclusion* as causing difficulties in involving certain parents in their children's schooling. Exclusion refers to various material and symbolic, social and cultural circumstances making it difficult for those excluded to function as equals in society. Exclusion is most often understood as socially conditioned, with the parents' difficulties in making their way onto the labour market emphasized as a major problem when it comes to parent involvement. However, arguments focusing on "excluded parents" are often interwoven with arguments emphasizing parents' "ethno-cultural differences" as the main problem, making it quite difficult to separate the *ethno-cultural* from the *social*.

Mahmut is a representative from a parents' association in Stockholm. He lives together with his wife and their two children in a neighbourhood of terraced housing next to Öberga school. Mahmut went as far as to argue that satellite-TV-watching, native language teaching and participation in various activities associated with "ethnic clubs and associations" constitute a threat to the existence of an integrated Swedish society. Over the longer term, the parents become isolated, locked into the "native country's traditions" and into the local community, where they, together with their "compatriots", pass the time cultivating myths about Swedish society. The distrust of Swedish society nourished in the local community is then passed on to their children. In their former native countries, the parents—in accordance with the cultural conceptions of school and of the task of the school that prevailed in these countries—handed the majority of the responsibility for education to the school. In Sweden, argued Mahmut, they are also placed in a disadvantaged situation in which they are not able to assume responsibility for either their own lives or for those of their children. They are declared incompetent as citizens and made dependent on the state.

The only solution that Mahmut saw was for parents to abandon their nostalgia for their native countries, break out of their dependency on benefits and take the initiative to be fully integrated in Swedish society. He presented himself as an example of how integration can work in practice. Mahmut migrated to Sweden during the 1970s and had thereafter purposefully worked his way up to his current position as a well-paid official in central Stockholm. In order to contribute to his children's success, he is now among other things a member of the parent council at his children's

school and sits on the board of directors of a hockey club in Strandhagen. He is also involved in a parents' association in the city. He argued that hardly any children in Strandhagen play hockey. His children were the only ones at the club whose parents were immigrants in Sweden. Mahmut claims that playing hockey would be a big step in combating the exclusion that many of the Strandhagen residents live in.

When exclusion is understood in such a way, complex *social processes* in society appear as fixed and static *conditions*. In this understanding, it is very difficult to make sense of how these conditions have emerged in time and space. This kind of redefinition means, for example, that it is often difficult to identify anyone else who might be responsible for the existing state of affairs other than the excluded themselves. They have themselves to blame. They have the wrong attitude, lack motivation; they are not sufficiently qualified; lack "social competence". There is a long list of arguments focusing primarily on the "defects" of the excluded. Exclusion appears to have a more or less unavoidable logic (Dahlstedt, 2015). According to the destructive logic of exclusion, long-term unemployment and drawing social welfare benefits are claimed to produce distrust, alienation and passivity among the excluded. This particular representation of the problem is produced in relation to an imagined ideal of responsible and active, risk- and self-conscious individuals who *want*, by their own efforts, to take the initiative, to get a grip on themselves and not to be a burden on society (cf. Rose, 1996: 40).

All of the informants emphasized that active labour market policy measures, giving more parents than today access to the labour market, were necessary in order to bring about lasting change in relation to prevailing conditions. However, the work conducted by the schools in relation to parents is focused in other directions. Most of the attention of schools is focused on gradually changing the parents who find themselves in a state of exclusion, rather than on counteracting the processes that has created this situation (cf. McLaren, 2003, p. 248). Although the excluded parents are problematized, this problem is not regarded as being permanent. Rather, it is seen as possible to change the parents into being more responsible, by means of a variety of measures.

Then what about the solutions? The destructive logic of exclusion may be counteracted by initiating contacts between parents and the school. Through such contacts, the excluded parents are supposed to strengthen their motivation, curiosity and both their own and their children's desire to learn. In this way, the parents will also strengthen their trust in society and, not least, in themselves and their own ability. According to the main argument, the feeling of hopelessness claimed to characterize the view of life of the excluded parents, needs to be turned into a feeling of belief in the future, which they can in turn convey to their children. Thus, parent involvement is seen as important in order to improve not only the situation for the parents, but for the whole *family*—as well as for the school. For the schools' part, it is necessary in their relations with parents to create a sense of trust and to treat parents with respect—not to dismiss their wishes and views as illegitimate from the start. An increased parental presence in school is therefore desirable, not as an end in itself, but because it makes it possible to gradually change the parents' way of understanding themselves and their children, as well as the school and society in general.

Swedish Values, Ideal Parents…and Others

However, the will of activating and including "immigrant parents" found among officials and staff is quite paradoxical. On the basis of the principle that collaboration is an end in itself, it is emphasized—on the one hand—that parents have a right to participation and influence and that parents constitute a resource. On the other hand, in this particular will of activating parents there are boundaries drawn between "immigrants" and "Swedes", "Swedish" and "non-Swedish". By the drawing of these boundaries, people are not only separated and made "different" from each other. Immigrant parents are perceived as problems to collaborations between home and school. Even if the schools' intention is that the partnership between parents and the school should be used as a means to inform and communicate, to involve "immigrant parents" and get them to take an active part in their children's schooling, the goodwill described may have several contradictory consequences. The conditions for the partnership may, for example, involve demands that the parents adapt themselves to what is portrayed as being normal and desirable.

Running through the interviews, like an organizing principle, is the concept of *värdegrund*, delimiting the set of democratic "core values" on which the Swedish educational system is built. It is with reference to these core values that both pupils' and parents' involvement in school is to be "strengthened". According to the national curriculum, the teacher is to "clarify and discuss the core values of Swedish society and its consequences for individual behaviour together with the pupils" (Curriculum, 2011, p. 12). In the same paragraph, it is also emphasized that the teacher is to "collaborate with the home in the education of the pupils and in doing so is to clarify the school's norms and rules as a basis for this work and for the collaboration" (Curriculum, 2011, p. 13).

Throughout the curriculum, there is a distinction made between "us" and "them", "we" who belong in Sweden, sharing the core values of Swedish society, and those who do not. In one passage, it is noted that "The school shall convey and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values that Swedish society rests upon" Curriculum, 2011, p. 7). What then are the specific values that schools, according to the curriculum, shall convey to pupils and clarify in relation to parents? In the curriculum, the core values are defined accordingly:

> The inviolability of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal worth of all human beings, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and disadvantaged constitute the values that schools are to mould and convey. (ibid.)

In this list of values, the following clarification is also made:

> In accordance with the ethics that have been held under the stewardship of the Christian tradition and western humanism this takes place through education to produce a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility. (ibid.)

Throughout the curriculum education, culture and core values are conceptualized in the singular, implying that the ongoing education of democratic citizens is about forming citizens on the basis of a uniform set of core values. By linking these core

values to particular roots, defined in ethnic, religious or cultural terms, a distinction is explicitly made between Christian and non-Christian, Western and non-Western, with the Christian/Western represented as the norm and the non-Christian/non-Western as others needing to adapt to the norm. This way of defining the core values of Swedish schools illustrates how also universal, apparently neutral principles of democracy, enlightenment and equality—i.e. the characteristics of a *good democratic citizenship*—may serve as a basis for excluding those regarded as "not belonging".

Concluding Remarks

In order to further analyse the partnership arrangement between "immigrant parents" and the school, let me return to the previous discussion of *parental responsibilization*. In a way, the involvement of parents in the ongoing work of the school could be understood as a multifaceted form of governing involving not only schools and parents—but also pupils (cf. Runfors, 2003). Through the arrangement of certain parent—school partnerships, parents are being indirectly involved in the schools' project of educating the pupils, in accordance with the predetermined conventions of the school system (cf. Keogh, 1996; Crozier, 1998).

What, then, does this mean for pupils and parents? First and foremost, it means that the partnership between school and parents is conditional in several respects, not least in the sense that the partnership often takes place on the school's terms rather than the parents (Ranson et al., 2004). The partnership is also—most often implicit—arranged according to the presupposition that it is "the Swedes" who are the ones to activate/enlighten/involve "the immigrants". The explicit goal of the partnership, according to official doctrines, may be to *cross* cultural boundaries, but at the same time these boundaries are in fact *emphasized* as a result of the way partnership between parents and the school is understood, on the basis of the metaphor of "the meeting of cultures". Those parents not considered "ready" for a "modern Sweden" and its blessings of liberty risk being made into objects of blame and subjected to various demands that they should adapt to the norm.

However, the ways in which the partnership between school and parents is represented and arranged, the ways in which both children and parents are created—and create themselves—as "democratic subjects", are not given. In different schools, there are different circumstances and on the basis of these different strategies are developed. The contradictions emerging in the interviews give us, I would suggest, reason to be hopeful. The problematizing of "immigrant parents" is not homogenous or unidirectional. On the contrary, several informants explicitly distanced themselves from representations stigmatizing "immigrants". The arguments not uncommonly include conflicting ideas. In addition to arguments that focus on the parents' language and culture as serious obstacles to partnership, there are several other arguments nuancing, and at times contradicting, the language and culture line of argument. Nonetheless, notions of "linguistic and cultural deficits" appear as quite normalized among the informants.

An ongoing, critical dialogue about education, parenting and multiculturalism are needed, where the one-sided focus on the lack of resources, alleged cultural or other "deficiencies" among "immigrant parents" is challenged and *all* parents, their languages and cultures, are approached more as resources than as problems. In order to find alternative ways of arranging partnerships between home and school, it is crucial that the ideas, ambitions and actions of parents are understood in the light of a complex interplay of a range of factors, material as well as symbolic, institutional as well as structural, located within as well as outside of the school.

The school is an arena not only for domination, but also for negotiation and resistance (McLaren, 2003). It provides space for both continued subordination and for people to engage in alternative "ways of being political by refusing to constitute themselves via the gaze of the dominant groups and thereby define new rights and responsibilities…" (Isin, 2002, p. 273). Certain parents may see a strategic value in *accepting* rather than challenging existing problem-ideologies about "immigrant parents", their imagined deficiencies and their deviance, as a way of gaining access to the school system while at the same time establishing a negotiating position—characterized by legitimacy, representation and resources. Other parents may as a result of such problem-ideologies feel that are being singled out and made to feel unwelcome, rather than being given an invitation to participate—which may in turn breed both open and silent opposition on the part of those that are singled out. The partnership between schools and the local community certainly opens up opportunities for a broad repertoire of actions and strategies for various "partners", and the outcomes are anything but given in advance.

If the school—including administrators, principals and teachers—approach *all* parents more as resources than problems, there are possibilities for developing a partnership on more equal terms, based on relationships of mutual learning, where both parties give and take, rather than a hierarchical relationship between those who learn and those who teach. With a partnership based on such a premise, there are long-term prospects that also pupils with non-academic parents will improve their school performance, which has also been demonstrated in a range of studies on collaborations between school, parents and non-profit organizations (Anyon, 2005; Turney & Kao, 2009). Several studies have also shown how parents, individually as well as collectively, in non-profit organizations, by becoming more actively involved in school, can help create a more inclusive learning environment, where pupils may be provided with the help and support they might otherwise not be provided (cf. Jeynes, 2007; Lahdenperä, 2004; Owens & Johnson, 2009).

In a partnership between school and parents based on equal terms and mutual respect, more parents can also start developing confidence in school and, in the long term, they can start attending parent meetings and other activities initiated by the school (Dahlstedt & Hertzberg, 2011). Thus, a collaboration between schools and parents founded on mutual trust rather than mutual mistrust is essential for the school to become more inclusive and to be able to foster students—regardless of their background—into democratic citizens of tomorrow (Bouakaz, 2007; Lahdenperä, 2004).

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Chapter 6
Chinese Immigrant Parents' Involvement in Their Children's School-Based Education: Behaviours and Perceptions

George Zhou and Lan Zhong

Abstract This chapter explores how Chinese immigrant parents are involved in their children's school-based education and what factors shape the formats of their involvement. Twelve Chinese immigrant families were interviewed. Data analysis revealed that Chinese immigrant parents believed that parental involvement was beneficial to both the school and children and they involved themselves in school-based activities regardless of personal experiences. However, generally speaking, participants did not go to their children's school without teachers' invitation. Language barrier, lack of time and energy and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school culture were reported as the main factors that limited participants' involvement in school-based activities. Particularly, new immigrants often felt intimidated to talk to teachers since they did not know what they can say and what not to say given their unfamiliarity with the Canadian school culture.

Keywords Parents' school involvement · Chinese immigrant parents · Culture Language barrier · Parent–teacher relations

Introduction

Education should not take place only between teachers and students. Parents can play a significant role. Involvement of parents in education can happen both in school and at home (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). It can take

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different formats such as parenting, communicating between home and school, volunteering in school events, home learning, participating in school decision-making and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2001). The impacts of parental involvement in children's education have attracted much attention from scholars for decades (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Taylor & Lopez, 2005; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Relevant studies have documented that effective parental involvement leads to students earning higher grades and test scores (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007), reducing the achievement gap between high and low performing students (Lee & Bowen, 2006) and increasing positive behaviour and emotional development of children (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Taub, 2008; Taylor & Lopez, 2005). Most recently, Jeynes (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 studies to examine the relationship between various kinds of parental involvement programs and the academic achievement of K-12 school children. Results indicate a significant relationship between parental involvement programs and academic achievement, both for younger and for older students. Parental involvement programs, as a whole, were associated with higher academic achievement.

Up to today, the overall positive impacts of parent involvement have been well accepted in spite of the fact that the type of parental involvement and the context of involvement can generate different impacts on students' school achievement and behaviours (Jeynes, 2005a; McNeal, 1999). As a result, USA has elevated parental involvement in schools to a national priority to address such issues as the large number of failing schools and increased achievement gap between white students and ethnic minority students (Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008). In Canada, Ontario Ministry of Education issued a parental engagement policy to guide its implementation at schools, boards and the ministry (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; Wong, 2015).

Within the past two decades, there has been a rapid growth of Chinese immigration in Canada. For example, Citizenship and Immigration of Canada (2015) reported that over 314,000 Chinese changed their home residence from China to Canada in the decade between 2005 and 2014. People with Chinese ancestry have become the second largest minority group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). Due to the Canadian immigration policy, most recent Chinese immigrants were highly educated professionals and financially independent before they moved to Canada (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006). As a unique group, the involvement of Chinese immigrant parents deserves special attention given their different views and practices in education and parenting (Jiang, Zhou, Zhang, Beckford, & Zhong, 2012; Liu, 2015). Howard and Reynolds (2008) stated that most of the general parental involvement literature fails to fully consider the role of race and class when examining parenting practices within schools. This study of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in education will address such a gap in the literature.

Our research team have been conducting comprehensive studies to examine how Chinese immigrant parents get involved in their children's education, home-based and school-based. Topics explored have included parent–teacher communication (Jiang et al., 2012), parent–children communication (Liu, 2015), parental involvement in afterschool music education (Zhang, 2016), parent involvement in home-

based activities (Zhou & Zhong, in press) and parental involvement in school-based activities. The demographic, social, language and cultural factors were explored to understand the behaviours and perceptions of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in education. This paper reports the findings regarding their school-based involvement. The central research question for this study was how Chinese immigrant parents engaged themselves with schools for their children's education. Insights of the study will inform school administrators and teachers to develop better partnership with immigrant parents.

Literature

Parents' socio-demographic factors such as family income, occupational status, educational level and relationships influence the ways they get involved in their children's education (Coleman, 1998; Perna, 2004). Studies have identified a correlation between parents' socio-economic status (SES) and their involvement (Benson & Martin, 2003; Inaba et al., 2005; Shumow & Harris, 2000). For instance, in a study exploring the correlation between parents' school involvement and their work status and family income, Benson and Martin (2003) found that parents holding low SES participated less in the schools than their higher SES counterparts due to inflexible work schedules, the need to take more jobs and/or fatigue from work. Lareau (2003) found that middle-class white and black parents were more strategic in intervening in their children's schools than were black working-class parents.

Studies have suggested that parents from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may view and interpret the meaning of parental school involvement differently (Jeynes, 2005b; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Mau, 1997). For instance, some cultures such as Chinese culture (Guo, 2011) and Hispanic culture (Espinosa, 1995) view it as rude for a parent to intrude into the life of school and the parents from these cultures prefer to get involved in their children's education at home (this is changing in Chinese culture. See Guo, Wu, & Liu in Chapter 6 in this book). In contrast, parents from Western cultures may spend much time in their children's school because their cultures encourage establishing a closer parent–school relationship (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Regardless of their socio-economic statuses, Chinese American parents are more likely than European parents to spend time helping their children at home (Kao & Tienda, 1998). Similarly, Li (2005) pointed out that Asian immigrants tend to be more involved in their children's education outside school than in school.

Chinese usually see education as the most important means to acquire personal advancement, high social status, wealth and respect. Particularly, they place great emphasis on academic achievement to achieve such social mobility (Dyson, 2001; Li, 2001; Zhou, 1997). This value about education is carried into their new places of residence. They do not only actively re-educate themselves, but also hold high

expectations of their children's education. They promote high levels of educational attainment for their children to compensate for the anticipated discrimination in the job market (Kao, 1995).

With high expectations of their children's education, Chinese immigrants often get actively involved in their children's education (Guo, 2006). It is well known that Chinese parents assign extra homework to their children and register them in many afterschool programs (Li, 2001; Louie, 2001). However, less is known about how they are involved in the school-based activities. Studies of Latin American immigrants' education involvement have shown that immigrant parents often get less involved in school-based activities and that could be mistaken as lack of interest in their children's academic work (Commins, 1992). Guo (2006) also noticed that it was difficult to get English-as-a-second language (ESL) parents, including Chinese parents, involved in K-12 education, and the absence of ESL parents from school was often misinterpreted as parents' lack of concern about their children's education.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory

This study employed sociocultural theory as its theoretical framework. Sociocultural theorists argue that human development is essentially social, deriving from human social relations and situated in interpersonal, socio-historical as well as sociocultural contexts (Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002). A key feature of the sociocultural approach is an examination of human development that is based on not only the qualities that reside within an individual, but also the social interactions in broader social and cultural contexts.

Sociocultural contexts affect human development at an interpersonal level through face-to-face interactions and at a sociocultural level through participation in cultural activities. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) state that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems and can be best understood when investigated with regard to their historical contexts. Also, different social and cultural contexts create and reflect different outcomes in terms of human behaviour (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987).

Sociocultural theorists examine what kind of social practices provide the proper context for the development of human mind and how human beings construct contexts (Li, 2001). In the process of adapting themselves to the host society, Chinese immigrants' values and behaviours, including their perspectives and behaviours of involvement in their children's school education, will shape and be shaped by the new social and cultural system. Sociocultural theory is helpful in understanding how Chinese immigrant parents construct their parental practices based on their previous experiences, Chinese cultural values, a new cultural context, as well as how they pass on their cultural values through parenting.

Parental Involvement Model

While sociocultural theory helps us explain human behaviours and development at the macro-level, an in-depth understanding of human behaviour requires psychological analysis (Mishra, 2013). Therefore, our study referred to a psychological model of parental involvement developed by Walker et al. (2005). Modifying the model of parental involvement proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), Walker et al. (2005) classify parental involvement as two types: school-based and home-based (Fig. 6.1). They explain parents' involvement decisions from three psychological aspects: (a) parents' motivational beliefs, (b) parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others and (c) parents' perceived life context. Parents' motivational beliefs are defined as their self-constructed role and self-efficacy for getting involved in their children's education. Parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others entail their perceptions of the general invitation for involvement from the school and the specific invitation from the teacher and children. Parents' perceived life context refers to their beliefs about whether they have time, energy, skills and knowledge to get involved in children's education.

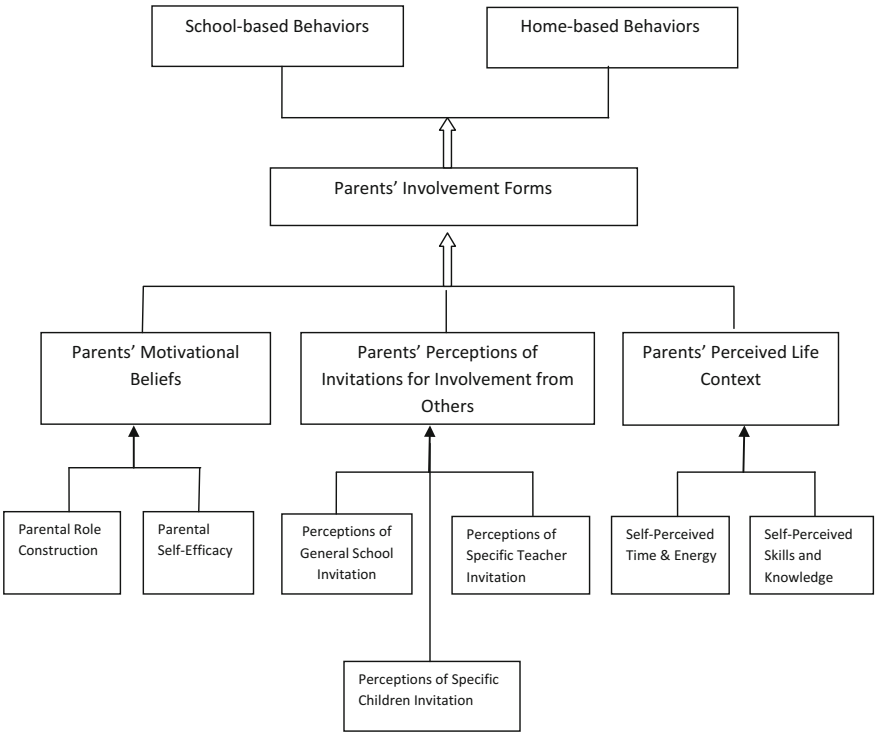

Fig. 6.1 Walker et al.'s (2005) model of the parental involvement process

Walker et al.'s (2005) model was developed largely from the studies of white parents. Compared with these parents, immigrant parents have a unique social and cultural context. Chinese parents face various challenges due to the discontinuity they experience in multiple areas including language, cultural values, employment, and different social and education systems. Their Chinese cultural values, education backgrounds, financial resources and ability to cope with the challenges will exert influence on any one of the three psychological constructs and consequently have impact on their involvement in children's education. Past studies have actually provided some evidence for this impact (Jeynes, 2003; Li, 2005). Therefore, while this model of parent involvement provides us general guidance for our study, we simultaneously examine its feasibility in explaining Chinese immigrant parents' behaviours and perspectives in school-based involvement.

Methodology

The study was conducted in a south-west Ontario city, which is the fourth most ethno-culturally diverse city in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). With a relatively mild winter, its proximity to the USA, low costs of living and the existence of a large Chinese community, this city has attracted an increasing number of Chinese immigrants. Since Chinese children have appeared on almost all school campuses across the city, the region becomes a significant location for studies of Chinese parents' school involvement.

The nature of this study is qualitative, using interview as the main data collection method. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p. 17). Qualitative research is interested in the process and meaning of experience rather than outcome (Creswell, 2012). It attends to the rich descriptions that emerge from participants' contextual experiences and helps the researchers understand their participants and the sociocultural contexts within which they live (Creswell, 2013). It benefits researchers in gathering in-depth data by asking questions and listening to participants' descriptions in their own language and on their own terms in an authentic world (Patton, 2002).

Participants

With assistance from a local Chinese association, twelve Chinese immigrant couples were recruited to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. All participants were from mainland China and had at least one child attending elementary schools when the study took place. The rationale for selecting participants from mainland China was because it had taken over Hong Kong and Taiwan as the largest single source of Chinese immigrants to Canada since 1997, and this trend has continued to today

(Citizenship and Immigration of Canada , 2015). The major reason we chose parents of elementary school age children was because studies have indicated that parents tend to become less involved in their children's schooling at the high school level (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap, & Hevey, 2000; Simon, 2004). In addition, we selected participants from those Chinese couples who had at least one work income and intentionally excluded those families with no work income. The families without work income normally come to Canada with financial resources, which pull their adaptation process off the main track of most Chinese immigrants' acculturation.

Table 6.1 presents the background information of the twelve participating families at the time of data collection, including their education, occupation in China and Canada, years of residence in Canada and their children. Six of the twelve families had one child, and the other six had two children. For the families with one child, one family had a son and five a daughter. Among the six families with two children, four families had one son and one daughter and two families had two sons. The majority of the families were highly educated professionals. Except for one mother who had a college diploma, the rest of the parents had received university degrees before they came to Canada. At the time of data collection, four parents had obtained a doctoral degree, eight a master's degree and two a bachelor's degree from Canadian universities. One father was finishing his master's degree, and two mothers were completing a bachelor's degree from Canadian universities. Seven parents did not pursue a Canadian degree. Seven families had resided in Canada for more than ten years and five families for less than five years. For the convenience of reporting, we use FF1 referring to the father from family one, and MF1, the mother from family one. Such abbreviation goes through the 12 families.

Data Collection

Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated that the researcher using qualitative interviews is "not looking for principles that are true all the time and in all conditions, like laws of physics; rather the goal is understanding of specific circumstances how and why things actually happen in a complex world" (p. 38). Typically, the researcher develops a set of related questions geared towards discovering what people do, think and feel, how they account for their experiences and actions, and what opportunities and obstacles they face (Berg, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in this study. A set of open-ended questions were developed to collect self-reported information about participants' experiences with, perspectives of and expectations about their involvement in their children's school education. Particularly, the challenges and confusions they had in their attempts to become involved in school education were explored. Semi-structured interviews provided enough room for participants to interpret the questions asked and express their general views or opinions in detail, and meanwhile allowed the researchers to maintain some control over the flow of the topics (Berg, 2009).

Table 6.1 Background information of the 12 families

Participants		Education	Occupation		Years in Canada
			China	Canada	
Family 1	Father	Ph.D.*	Science researcher	Mechanical engineer	13
	Mother	B.Sc.	System engineer	Homemaker	
	Son	Grade 2			
	Daughter	Sophomore			
Family 2	Father	B.Sc.	Engineer and manager	Labour worker	4
	Mother	B.Sc.* (finishing)	Accountant	University student	
	Son	Grade 1			
Family 3	Father	Master*	Software engineer	Technician	4
	Mother	B.Sc.* (finishing)	Software engineer	University student	
	Daughter	Grade 3			
Family 4	Father	Ph.D.*	Professor	Electrical engineer	15
	Mother	Master*	Professor	Mechanical engineer	
	Son	Grade 4			
	Son	Grade 11			
Family 5	Father	MBA*	Department manager	Labour worker	3
	Mother	College diploma	Technician	Labour worker	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 6	Father	Master*	Science researcher	Computer engineer	14
	Mother	Master*	Science researcher	Accountant	
	First Son	Grade 4			
	Second Son	Grade 11			
Family 7	Father	B.A.	Businessman	Self-employed	13
	Mother	Master	Medical doctor	Massage therapist	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 8	Father	Master*	Professor	Computer engineer	4.5
	Mother	Master*	Journalist	Homemaker	
	Son	Kindergarten			
	Daughter	Grade 5			
Family 9	Father	Ph.D.*	Scientific Researcher	Computer engineer	14
	Mother	B.Sc.*	Medical doctor	Public health consultant	
	Daughter	Grade 3			
	Son	Freshman			
Family 10	Father	M.B.A.* (finishing)	Marketing manager	College student	3
	Mother	B.A.	Interpreter	Self-employed	
	Daughter	Grade 6			
Family 11	Father	B.Sc.	Computer engineer	Mechanist	11
	Mother	B.Sc.*	Librarian	Learning commons specialist	
	Daughter	Grade 7			
Family 12	Father	Master*	Editor	Homemaker	13
	Mother	Ph.D.*	Professor	Professor	
	Son	Grade 3			
	Daughter	Freshman			

Note * = degree obtained in Canada

Participating parents from the same family were interviewed together. Interview locations were chosen based on the convenience and comfort of the participants. Participants were informed that they could choose to be interviewed either in English or in Mandarin. All participants chose Mandarin since it is the mother tongue of the participants and the researchers. This assured an effective and accurate communication between the researchers and the participants.

Most interviews lasted approximately 60–90 min and were audio recorded. However, two couples felt uncomfortable to have their voices recorded. Each of their interviews took about two hours so that the researchers had time to note down their responses. Primary data analysis began "immediately after completing the first interview" (Maxwell, 2004, p. 77) so that the following interviews were informed by what was learned from previous ones regarding what questions were asked and in what ways they were asked. The themes in early interviews were clarified with more probing in later interviews.

Field notes were taken to record the information that the audio recorder could not catch, such as interview time and location, participants' gestures and specific expressions during the interview, and the quick insights the researchers might come up with during the interview. These field notes served as a reminder for the researchers to recall what happened in the interviews when transcribing and analysing the interview recordings. Some information revealed from informal dialogues before or after the interview was recorded in the field notes as well, which provides additional data beyond the tape recording.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the researchers listened and transcribed the recording if time permitted. Follow-up phone calls were made within one week of the completion of the face-to-face interview to check whether participants had any information they wanted to add or to ask them to elaborate on some points they talked about during the interview. The interview notes of those two non-recorded interviews were sent back to the participants to confirm the accuracy. Interviews were transcribed and analysed in Mandarin. Some typical statements participants made during interviews were translated into English when we decided to include them in the report as quotations. The data analysis was cross-checked by both researchers who were each proficient in English and Mandarin.

Berg (2009) suggests that researchers conduct both qualitative and quantitative analyses on content in order to produce a comprehensive understanding of the data. While qualitative analysis deals with the themes and antecedent-consequent patterns of theme, quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of theme. In this study, we conducted quantitative analysis to collect information about questions such as how many participants participated in parent–teacher conferences and how many of them had overall positive experiences with their contacts with schools. It was simply to tally participants' responses embedded in their interviews. Qualitative analysis was

used to answer questions such as why participants participated or did not participate in parent–teacher conferences and what their experiences, concerns and expectations looked like with their involvement in school education. Qualitative analysis was much more complex than the quantitative process since it involved a process of coding and recoding. Berg states that the process of coding can employ both deductive and inductive approaches. The deductive approach uses some categories suggested by a theoretical perspective, literature review, research questions or interview questions. It creates analytical categories for the researcher to start assessing data. In contrast, the inductive approach begins with the researchers immersing themselves in the documents in order to make sense of them. When analysing our data, we were aware that we looked for the evidence of participants' experiences and challenges with school involvement, which served as analytical categories. However, our coding followed an open process (Strauss, 1987). When we initially read over the data, we noted down any significant items on the documents without limiting our attention to any preset topics. In later stages, initial codes were merged into significant themes. For each theme, there were a few subthemes to support the main concept. In the process of data coding, a constant comparative analysis was used (Schwandt, 2001). It involved taking one piece of data and comparing it with all others that might be similar or different in order to develop assumptions about the possible relationships among various pieces of data.

Findings

School-Based Involvement

Responding to the question about their perspectives on school involvement, all participants expressed a belief that school involvement is positively associated with their children's educational development. They listed the following potential benefits of parental involvement: (1) parents get information about their children's academic performance and behaviours at school; (2) parents and teachers know the expectations of each other; (3) parents have a chance to meet other parents and share experience in educating their children. By gaining this information, participants believed they could provide better support to their children. For instance, when asked about the connection between parental involvement in school activities and their child's development, MF12 said, "Through attending school activities, we know our child's school performance and know what is going on in the school. Thus, we can offer better help for our child's development". MF9 stated, "I like to talk with other parents when I meet them in school. I talk to them about how they educate their children. I also get more information about the school by talking with them". The types of school involvement participants reported included parent–teacher conference, fund-raising, attending school performances, volunteering and serving on the parent council.

Parent–Teacher Conference

All participants reported that they attended parent–teacher meetings regardless of whether or not language was a barrier. MF5 stated that her English was not good, but she still attended the conference with her husband: "Although my English is not good, I like to go, sitting beside my husband. I want to know all the information about my daughter instead of staying home waiting for a report from my husband". Sometimes, both parents went to the meeting together. Other times, only one parent had time to go to the meeting. For instance, MF9 said, "My husband and I tried to arrange the time to attend the parent–teacher conference together. However, most of the time, I attend this conference on my own since my husband is too busy".

The number one topic that participants often asked about during the parent–teacher conference was their children's academic achievement. For instance, MF8 responded, "I asked about my daughter's academic performances in school, her weaknesses and strengths in each subject. I asked for teachers' suggestions about how I can assist her at home". Similarly, MF9 said:

> I asked the teacher about my daughter's academic achievement such as whether she likes to ask questions in class, whether she is actively involved in group work, what kind of things I can do to help my daughter's academic development at home, and so on.

The academic emphasis was particularly strong for recently arrived families (F2, F3, F5, F8 and F10). For instance, MF2 had been in Canada for four years at the time of data collection. She remarked, "I always ask my daughter's academics. Academic is the most important thing for school children". MF3 had been in Canada for four years. She said:

> I asked the teacher about whether my daughter could catch up with her peers in academics, and whether she had any language difficulty in school. When we moved to Canada, she had finished grade 3 in China. My English is not good, so I am concerned about my daughter's language proficiency.

Besides academic achievement, participating parents who arrived in Canada earlier also asked about their children's social and moral behaviours. For instance, MF4, who had resided in Canada for fifteen years, said, "In addition to asking my son's academic performance, I also ask whether my son respects teachers, whether he follows school rules, and whether he is getting along with other children". These parents were found to be more concerned about school events as well. For instance, family 1 arrived in Canada over thirteen years prior to the study. FF1 said:

> We also want to know what and when school events are going to take place, such as children's show, swimming competition, and fundraising. When I get this information, I can arrange time to attend these activities, or my wife can take part in these activities according to her availability.

Family 6 had been in Canada for fourteen years. MF6 said:

> I am not concerned much about my son's academics because the teacher always tells me that my son is doing very well. He always gets A's. Beside academics, I also want to know what is happening or what is going on in the school so that I can manage to get actively involved in these activities. As well, I can give my child some instructions.

Fund-raising

Participating parents actively supported their children to participate in different types of fund-raising activities. Some parents encouraged their children to sell chocolates in the community for their schools. Others cooked food at home and let their children sell it to raise fund for their schools. MF8, a homemaker, said, "I learnt from other parents how to bake cookies. My daughter took cookies I made to school and sold them to her schoolmates. Then, she gave the money to school". FF7 said, "Sometimes, my daughter brings home book orders. I usually buy some for my daughter [so that the school can get some money from my order]".

Participants believed that fund-raising contributes to school and they all would like to take part in these activities when they were able to. FF9 remarked, "The public schools in China do not ask parents to raise fund to support school projects. However, since my child's school here expects and encourages parents and children to raise fund and [I believe] it is good for the school, we do our best to support this activity".

Some participants stated that participation in fund-raising activities not only benefitted the school but also provided opportunities for their children to develop their social skills. For instance, FF3 expressed his view on fund-raising:

> Participation in school fundraising not only benefits the school, but also the child. To raise funds, children are sometimes required to sell chocolates. We drive her and stand far away. I watch her knocking at the doors and talking to either our friends or strangers to sell chocolates. My daughter is very shy. This activity helps her develop social skills.

Attending Children's School Performance

The majority of parent participants, ten out of the twelve families, remarked that they usually attended their children's school performances such as school concerts and sport events. FF1 narrated his experience of attending a Christmas celebration: "My wife and I attended his Christmas performance last year. While my son was singing and dancing with his peers on the stage, we were so proud of him. I videotaped his fabulous performance". MF9 said, "My husband and I often go together to attend my daughter's shows in school. If my husband is too busy, I will go to the show myself".

Participants commented that to attend children's performance is a way to express how much they care and support their children. They believed that children would have a sense of pride when they knew that their parents were present in their performance, as MF11 stated:

> A child needs support and encouragement from parents. When my husband and I took part in my daughter's performance, my daughter was very happy and excited. She even drew a picture, which depicted a couple watching their daughter's show in school. That picture was put up on the classroom wall by her teacher.

Fieldtrips

In terms of fieldtrips, two mothers (MF1 and MF8) and one father (FF12), who were homemakers, stated that sometimes they assisted teachers to supervise students in fieldtrips. MF8 said, "I don't work, so I go to fieldtrips. I feel good that I can do something for the school". MF1 perceived that her English proficiency was not good enough to communicate with native English speakers, but she would like to volunteer herself as a fieldtrip assistant if there were some Chinese children in a fieldtrip. FF12 remarked, "Volunteering makes me feel that I could contribute to the school".

Parent Council

Among the 12 families, only two mothers (MF4 and MF12) reported that they were members of parent council. In regards of her understanding of parent council, MF4 remarked:

> The parent council aims to involve parents into a school's decision-making process. Through the parent council, parents can voice their opinions about school issues and contribute to the on-going school plans and events… By being a parent council member and attending its monthly meeting, I get to know what the school is going to do and provide my opinions for many school issues. It also broadens my knowledge and understanding of the Canadian school culture, which will eventually help me take appropriate ways to raise my child.

In regard to her reasons for participating in the parent council, MF12 stated:

> My son is a little bit slow in learning. So I pay close attention to what is happening in school. As an immigrant parent, I have realized that Canadian school system is different from China. I hope the school and parents can better understand each other and I want my voice to be heard.

For the rest of ten families, four knew the function of parent council but never joined it, another four had heard of it but were not sure about its exact function, and the rest two had never heard about it. The researchers explained the function of parent council to the parents who had no knowledge about it during the interviews. When being asked whether they wanted to join this organization, these ten families provided a negative response. They believed that it was the school's responsibility to make decisions on school issues and parents should just follow the school's decision rather than voice their own opinions. In this regard, FF1 stated, "I trust the school. As a parent, we try our best to support the decision the school makes". MF10 said:

> We are not familiar with the Canadian school system. In China, schools do not ask parents to engage in school governance. It is the school's responsibility to make decisions and tell us what to do. What parents should do is to follow school decisions and to help our children at home.

Limitations for School Involvement

Although all participants got involved in some types of school-based activities, they remarked that they would not do so without an invitation from the school or teachers. They provided several reasons for the limited school involvement: lack of time, language barriers, unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system, and different cultural values.

The lack of time was the most commonly cited reason. Apparently, school activities took place during weekdays when many Chinese parents either were at work or attended university classes. At the time of this study, FF8 just found a position after years of searching for a job. He said:

> It is very difficult to find a job now…there is a lot of pressure at work. As a minority here, I have to work very hard and perform much better than mainstream people so that I can keep my job. I really do not have time [for school involvement].

Being a university student, MF2 said, "I am very busy with my university courses. There are many reading and writing assignments. I do not have enough time to attend school activities except for the parent–teacher conference". As a labour worker, MF5 expressed a similar point:

> I do labour work for 10 hours each day. When I return home, I am exhausted but unfortunately have to do housework. I really have no energy to attend my daughter's school events. If I ask for a leave from my work, I will lose salary. As a new immigrant family, seven or eight dollars are important to my family. I need the time to earn a living.

Language barrier is another reason that prevented some Chinese immigrant parents from getting involved in school-based activities. MF1, a homemaker, talked about her intention to volunteer in school fieldtrip: "I have time, but my English is not good. I would volunteer only when I knew there were some Chinese children attending the fieldtrip. So, I can offer help in my mother tongue". This holds especially true for the recently arrived parents. FF2 had been in Canada for four years. He said, "My English is not good. My wife talks with the teacher during the parent-teacher conference. Although her English is not very good either, she is a university student after all. She is better than me". MF5 has been in Canada for three years. She explained:

> My English is not good. I cannot completely understand what the teacher talks about during the parent-teacher conference. So, I just listen to my husband talking with the teacher. If my husband could not go for the parent-teacher conference, I do not think I would go.

The unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system was reported as another reason that hindered participants from getting involved in school-based activities. As FF5 remarked:

> In China, parents are not required to volunteer or do fundraising for school. What parents can do is to accompany the child doing homework, provide supplementary problem solving exercises, and buy whatever resources that benefit the child's leaning. In Canada, the school system is different… I don't go to school that often. I am not sure what I should say and do, and what I shouldn't. I am afraid that I might get into trouble by saying or doing some things inappropriately.

MF3 echoed the similar concerns: "I do not often get involved in school activities although I would like to. I am not familiar with the Canadian school culture. I do not know how to do it in a proper way". MF4, who is one of the two mothers attending parent council meetings, provided a good explanation about parents' lack of involvement in parent council:

> I do not see other Chinese immigrant parents attending parent council meetings. They are not aware of their rights. This may be because of the Chinese culture. China is a highly hierarchical country. In China, someone above you makes the decision. At work, you obey the boss. In school, you obey the teacher. Growing up in such a culture, Chinese parents become used to following the rules but not providing suggestions or expressing opinions.

Some participants (F2, F7 and F10) maintained that they trusted teachers would take care of their children well so that they would not go to school if they were not invited. FF2 expressed, "I seldom go to school to talk with teachers without invitation. We Chinese highly respect and trust the teacher. I believe the teacher would take care of my daughter very well". Parents (F7 and F10) also expressed that it was unnecessary to go to school often if their child was good at academics. FF10 commented:

> We do not think we need to go to school that often. My daughter's average score is over 90. She is doing very well in reading and math. You know, in China, only when a child is in trouble or is not good at academics, the teacher asks the parents to visit the school.

Discussion

Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of parental involvement in school. They believed that their involvement in school activities would keep them updated about their children's school performance, provide them opportunity to learn about the school and teachers' requirements and inform their ways of parenting at home. Although parents are not expected to participate in school fund-raising nor volunteer in fieldtrips in China, all participants of this study made an effort to take part in some kinds of school-based activities. These activities included parent–teacher conferences, school fund-raising and attendance of children's school performances. A few participants who were homemakers sometimes volunteered for school fieldtrips. Two participants joined parent councils.

Chinese people highly value education since education is seen as a means for social mobility in the past and present China (Li, 2001). This viewpoint of education does not go away after they move to Canada. This cultural inertia is actually reinforced by their life experiences as immigrants. As Table 6.1 indicates, a majority of participants had to receive education in Canadian post-secondary institutions in order to find a job in spite of their strong education background and rich work experiences in China. For example, the couple of F3 both had a bachelor's degree in science and were software engineers in China before moving to Canada. After spending one year to find a job without success in Canada, the husband had to obtain a master's degree in computer

science from a Canadian university. At the time of interview, he had just received a job offer as a computer technician in a private company. Similarly, in order to get into Canadian job market, his wife was pursuing a nursing degree in a Canadian university. Such experience may lead participants to believe that education was the best way to overcome barriers and compensate for anticipated discrimination in the job market as Kao (1995) reported. Therefore, they usually had high expectations of their children's education. This explains why all participants reported that children's academic performance was the greatest concern at the teacher–parent conference.

Past studies (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006; Muller, 1995) have documented that some white parents tend to get actively involved in school activities even without invitation from teachers. They like to take part in school decision-making processes, governance and advocacy. In contrast, this study found that most participants did not actively get involved in school activities if they did not receive an invitation from the school or teachers. The majority of participants reported no interest and action in getting involved in school decision-making processes and governance. This lack of involvement can find an explanation from the following aspects: socio-economic status, language barrier and cultural differences.

Socio-economic Status

Studies have documented that parents with a low SES participated less in school involvement than the parents with a higher SES due to inflexible work schedules, need to take more jobs and fatigue from work (Benson & Martin, 2003). This applied to Chinese immigrants as well. In our study, a majority of participants who were most infrequent in school involvement were from low-income and labour work families. Some of them had to have multiple jobs to support their families. They stated that when they returned home they were exhausted and had no time and energy to participate in their children's school activities although they desired.

Language Barrier

Besides the socio-economic status, language barrier was another factor that had impacts on parental school involvement. The real or perceived low English language proficiency hindered some parents from communicating with school and caused them to be less involved in their children's school activities. This finding is consistent with Mapp's (2003) study that shows parents who spoke languages other than English might experience fewer opportunities to volunteer in the schools. It is also consistent with Constantino, Cui and Faltis' (1995) study of the influence of the language barrier on Chinese parental involvement in schools. Their study indicates that the language barrier prevented Chinese immigrant parents from communicating with their children's teachers.

Cultural Differences

Epstein and Dauber (1991) state that white middle-class teachers may value and reward independence and assume that parents will involve themselves in the school activities of their children. But other cultures may view it as rude for parents to go to school without invitation. Thus, parents' low involvement in school cannot be universally understood as an indicator of less interest in their children's education. In Chinese culture, teachers and parents are expected to play different roles with respect to children's education (Gu, 2008; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Parents are responsible for their children's behaviours at home, while teachers are expected to be responsible for student's learning and behaviours at school. Only when a child is in trouble or is in need of extra help in academic work, are parents contacted. If students perform well in school, both teachers and parents do not feel the need for parents to go to the school.

A Chinese proverb, 师徒如父子(master and apprentice are similar to father and son), illustrates the Chinese teacher's authority role in education. Teachers are not only considered as experts in subject knowledge but have the power to discipline students. Therefore, there exists a hidden hierarchical relationship between teachers and parents in children's education in China. In addition, the long history of feudalism in China together with Confucius' philosophy on social structure has a profound influence on Chinese people's respect for authority (Bush & Qiang, 2002). Therefore, although Canadian school culture encourages a closer parent–school relationship nurtured by parents spending more time in school (Hill & Taylor, 2004), the majority of Chinese immigrant parents may not realize or grasp this opportunity. They tend to take a passive role in getting involved in school and allowed one-way communication to take place. In other words, Chinese immigrant parents tend to adapt and adjust themselves to meet the needs of the school rather than to voice their opinions regarding their children's education (see an exception in Guo & Mohan, 2008). This is particularly true for new Chinese immigrants who are less familiar with the North American culture and school system. In this study, participants who live in Canada less than five years were not sure about what to say and whom to talk with. They were afraid that they might offend the teachers if they asked or said something inappropriate. They choose to remain silent. 沉默是金 (silence is gold) is actually a life philosophy in Chinese culture, which is related to Confucius' philosophy 中庸之道 (the middle way). It warns people that when you do not know the appropriate thing to say, do not say anything. This life doctrine guides many Chinese people's behaviour in a social context.

Conclusions and Implications

In this study, all participants shared a belief that their school involvement would benefit their children's education. In other words, they did see their roles in their children's education as beneficial. However, some participants reported low self-efficacy for

actively getting involved in school-based activities due to the language barrier. This finding supports the model of Walker et al. (2005) in regard to the significance of parents' motivational beliefs. The main school-based activities that participants were involved in included attending parent–teacher conferences, volunteering on field-trips, fund-raising and attending school concerts and sports events. For these events, the parents often received invitations from schools or teachers. This finding supports Walker et al.'s model regarding the significance of parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, more specifically the invitation from the school and teachers in this study. As far as the factor of parents' perceived life context described in this model, this study also provides evidence. In this study, the lack of time and energy was reported as a major reason that impeded Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, particularly for newcomer participants. In addition, their inadequate knowledge about the English language and Canadian culture kept them from getting actively involved in many school-based activities. They felt intimidated to talk to teachers since they did not know what they could say and what not to say given their unfamiliarity with Canadian schools.

This study not only provides evidence to support the model of Walker et al. (2005), but also enriches this model with a cultural dimension. By exploring the perspectives and practices of a group of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in their children's school education, this study demonstrates that in addition to the three categories of factors portrayed in Walker et al.'s model, Chinese cultural values played an important role in defying how participants got involved in their children's school education. Teachers are considered as the authority of education in Chinese culture. This view of teachers' role in education stopped Chinese immigrant parents from actively voicing their views or concerns. Chinese parents' emphasis on academics assures that their most significant concern during the teacher–parent conference was their children's academic records. Recent literature has criticized Walker et al.'s model of parental involvement for its missing the component of education achievement values that parents hold (Hayes, 2012). We would like to argue that the education values of parents influence their behaviours of parenting at home and communications with the school or teachers. It should be considered as an embedded factor when examining parents' engagement with children's education rather than an independent format of parental involvement behaviours in addition to the home-based and school-based categories. This study sheds light on our understanding of how parents' education values influence their school-based involvement.

The findings of this study have practical implications for schools to make an effort to involve immigrant parents. Since time is a challenge for many immigrant parents due to their work or study schedules, teachers can use various methods to keep in touch with parents. Besides arranging face-to-face meetings, teachers can use emails, written notes, as well as phone calls to exchange information with parents on their children's school performances, school events and activities, and listen to parents' concerns, suggestions and expectations about their children's education. In order to help new immigrant parents to resolve the language barrier, school can provide translators with a bilingual background. Schools could also create opportunities for parents to understand better the Canadian school system and its expectations for chil-

dren and parents by hosting workshops with interpreters and distributing brochures in different languages. It will be a good idea as well for teachers to learn the essence of different cultural values in educating children so that they can be more effective and proactive in communicating with immigrant parents. Even further, we agree with Guo (2012) who suggested that teachers and school administrators should recognize and make use of parent knowledge. In today's school practice, environmentalists, scientists, police officers, fire workers and so on are invited to classrooms for a variety of educational purposes. Similarly, schools should invite immigrant parents to share their cultural knowledge with teachers and staff as part of their professional development. Immigrant parents can be invited into the classroom as well for students to develop understanding of different cultures. Besides the cultural knowledge, parents' knowledge about their children is significant as well. Children could perform differently in school from at home. Listening to parents' description should be insightful for teachers to understand children's behaviours in school and find solutions for student issues. Considering the cultural barrier Chinese parents have for school involvement, schools can organize information sessions to express explicitly their willingness to hear immigrant parents' voices about the school's curriculum and administration and as well to inform them about their rights to get involved. Such empowering process can be a significant effort to improve immigrant parents' involvement in school, as Bernhard (2010) reported.

All participating parents in this study are professionals with strong education backgrounds. Therefore, this study cannot represent other Chinese immigrants who are less educated. More research is necessary to examine the experience of the Chinese immigrants with less education although they only represent a very small portion of recent Chinese immigrants. Future study can also include the voices from teachers and immigrant children, which will provide different perspectives on immigrants' parental involvement in their children's school-based education.

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Part III
Parent-Teacher Relationships in International Contexts

Chapter 7
Changes in Parent–Teacher Relationships Under China's Market Economy

Yan Guo, Xueqin Wu and Xiaoli Liu

Abstract This chapter investigates how market economy affects parent–teacher relationships in China. The study drew from Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory. Data for the study were collected from interviews with 21 teachers and 20 parents in China. The study reveals changes in parent–teacher relationships in four aspects. First, the development of new technology facilitates a faster, more frequent, and more diverse communication between parents and teachers. At the same time, there are issues of unequal access and increasing inequality between urban and rural parents. Second, unlike Chinese parents in previous studies, parents in this study are more actively involved in their children's school education. Third, the market economy has shaken the high social status that Chinese teachers enjoyed in the past and teachers' knowledge has become commodified. This has led to more pragmatic relationships between parents and teachers. Finally, parents are more likely to challenge teachers' authority than in the past, and there have been more serious conflicts between parents and teachers. Implications for both educators and policymakers are also discussed.

Keywords Parent–teacher relationships · Market economy · China · Parent engagement · Technology · Parent–teacher communication · Inequality

Introduction

The "open door" policy since 1978 has gradually shifted China from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy. Over the past 40 years, China has experienced an economic miracle and a massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge. In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the USA in terms of gross domestic product. Under China's market economy, education is also undergoing processes of marketization and privatization in terms of orientation, provision, curriculum, and financing (Chan & Mok, 2001). Chan and

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Mok identify four features of education under China's market economy: the rise of private or non-government schools, funding from non-state sectors, an increasing number of self-paying students, and market-driven curricula. In this process, efficiency, effectiveness, and economy take priority over fairness, justice, and equality.

The marketization and privatization in education has brought significant changes to parent–teacher relationships in China. Since the time of Confucius, teachers have enjoyed honored standing in China, except during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). However, under China's market economy, teaching has become a commodity that can be traded in the market (S. Guo, 2016). In some schools, particularly private and *minban* schools (schools run by individuals, communities, or enterprises), the relations between teachers and parents have become like those between business and clients (Y. Guo, 2016). This chapter explores the changes in parent–teacher relationships under China's market economy from both parents' and teachers' perspectives. This chapter makes an original contribution to the field by challenging stereotyping assumptions toward Chinese parents who are not involved or only involved in their children's education at home. This chapter shows that contemporary Chinese parents are actively involved in their children's education at home and at school. It highlights some of the creative ways technology in China is being used to enable meaningful communication and learning between parents and teachers. At the same time, it shows how China's market economy is widening gaps between families, especially those able to pay for tuition of their children and those unable to afford it. These rare insights highlight current and emerging dangers to parent–teacher engagement with relevance beyond China.

Theoretical Framework and Prior Research

This research is informed by Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory. Bourdieu conceptualizes capital into three forms: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital includes resources that are directly convertible into monetary value and can be owned such as stocks and properties. Cultural capital incorporates knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has from the family heritage. Bourdieu contends that cultural capital can be unconsciously acquired and passively inherited from family over time through socialization of culture and tradition. This explains the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes. Moreover, people can build their cultural capital by engaging in activities that generate knowledge, skills, and educational qualifications. Academic qualification as a special form of cultural capital certifies an individual with "cultural competence" and gives them "a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 50). In addition, institutional recognition in the form of academic credentials "makes it possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51).

Social capital consists of social connections or networks and the benefits that individuals reap from such relationships. It is the sum of all actual and virtual resources that an individual accumulates through associations or networks based on mutual acquaintance and recognition. The relationship between a group and its group members is reciprocal in that group members contribute to the formation and development of the group with their economic, cultural, and social capital, and in return, they are entitled to credit the collective-owned capital of the group for their own benefits. The amount of social capital an individual possesses depends on the size of connections that they have access to and the capital that their connections possess. Bourdieu (1986) further points out that a social connection or network is not a natural given. Rather, it is "the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 53). In the context of school education, a typical network would be a class made up of teachers, students, and their parents. It is formed based on the common interest of promoting students' intellectual and personal growth. Generally speaking, the more immersed a member is in the group, the more social capital they can potentially build.

According to Bourdieu (1986), all forms of capital are transformable, with economic capital at the root of all the other types of capital. Take education for example. In a family, parents invest economic, cultural, and social capital for their child to acquire knowledge and skills which boost the child's cultural capital. The increased cultural capital then enables the child to get a well-paid job which brings immediate economical return in terms of a high salary. Meanwhile, by displaying the cultural capital, the child is more likely to gain acceptance and status in society and acquire social capital. In return, the social network can bring more opportunities which allow the person to obtain more economic capital which can be reinvested in cultural capital.

It is well documented that, in the past in China, teaching as a profession was held in high esteem. Historically, teachers were listed among the five categories of those most respected by society: the God of Heaven, the God of the Earth, the emperor, parents, and teachers (天、地、君、亲、师) (Zhou, 1988). As an educator and teacher, Confucius (孔子, 551–479 BCE) was himself venerated as a sage by generations of Chinese people. As a Chinese saying said, "Once a teacher, you are a father figure for a whole lifetime." Chinese parents viewed teachers as a professional authority and believed that it was the teachers' responsibility to educate their children. As Gu (2008) described, "most Chinese parents are either completely not involved in their child's education or particularly involved at home settings" (p. 576).

However, teachers' status has declined considerably in the last decade (Y. Guo, 2016). Parents, who have the ability to pay, expect teachers to provide the best service to their children. Teachers are complicit in the erosion of their social position. Many teachers now earn extra income from private tutoring of students after school hours. As one teacher noted in Y. Guo's (2016) study, sometimes the extra income even exceeds the teacher's salary. The private tutoring of these teachers reinforces the notion of teaching as a commodity. In other words, the roles of teachers and students have morphed to become like those between businesses and clients. The social status

of teachers has decreased from saints to civil servants. This is consistent with studies by Guo and Pungur (2008) and Zhou (2002), who found that the social status of teachers, members of a profession once so highly thought of and respected, needs to be reclaimed through renewed professionalism.

Gu's (2006, 2008) and Gu and Yawkey's (2010) studies showed that there were two most prominent models of Chinese parent involvement: "no involvement" and "home-based involvement." The "no involvement" model referred to parents who were not involved in their child's education. Parents believed that education is the responsibility of schools and teachers. Parents were only responsible for living necessities such as providing food and clothes to their child. The "home-based involvement" model referred to parents were mainly involved in their child's education in the home settings, such as reading before bedtime and helping with homework. Chinese parents focused much more on their child's academic development than their physical, emotional, and social development. Chinese teachers did not encourage parents to participate in school settings, but preferred home-based involvement. In Lau, Li, and Rao's (2011) study of the parent involvement model of 431 parents of kindergarten students in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, they found that Chinese parents practiced more home-based than school-based involvement.

Gu (2008) analyzed five historical and contemporary reasons of Chinese parent involvement. First, teachers were highly respected in Confucian tradition. Parents viewed teachers as the experts of education. Second, the education system was highly centralized and structured. It provided little space for parent involvement. Third, there was a long history of separation between family and school in China. Chinese parents lacked knowledge of school operation and were unaware of the benefits of active parent involvement. Fourth, many Chinese parents tried to avoid any conflict with teachers. When disagreements or concerns with school or teachers arose, they would rather find alternative resources to compensate for it, than discussing the concerns with teachers directly (Diamond, Wang, & Gomez, 2004). Fifth, the test-orientated education system evaluated students only through academic scores. Many Chinese parents believed that their children's bright future would be guaranteed since they could get high scores in academic studies.

Gu (2008) also stated why contemporary Chinese parents appreciated their children's education more than before for two reasons. The first reason was that traditional Chinese culture valued interdependent relationship between parents and children. The traditional culture believed that parents should provide children with abundant educational resources and enhancement. Then when they were getting old, they would be better taken care of by their children. The one-child policy (which has been changed to the two-children policy in 2016) since 1979 served as the second reason. The one-child represented the only hope and dreams of the family. Chinese parents were willing to do anything they could in order to provide the best education for their only child (Ming & Abbott, 1992).

Moreover, Chinese parents believed that academic success would determine their children's future. Therefore, they focused more on academic development, especially scores. They were more inclined to engage in homework support, which was directly related to schoolwork and school grades, but less in intellectual improvement if it was considered as conflict with the academic performance by adversely affecting the tests scores (Kim & Fong, 2013).

When facing the home-based parent involvement model, Chinese teachers appeared to be paradoxical. On the one hand, they recognized the benefits of active parent–teacher communication and suggested more parent involvement in children's educational activities. On the other hand, Chinese teachers took a historical dominant role in the decision-making of educational activities, as well as in the communication process (Quan & Dolmage, 2006). They considered themselves as the experts in education and did not welcome parent involvement at school. Some of them only communicated with parents when there were learning and behavior concerns of students (Xie & Postiglione, 2016). However, younger teachers with higher education degrees were more willing to engage parents in both school- and home-based activities (Gu & Yawkey, 2010).

Chi and Rao (2003) interviewed 13 rural families in China. Their research found that rural parents did not communicate with teachers or schools at all. They focused on instrumental purposes of education, such as to get a secure job or increase the family living standard. They believed in the importance of effort in children's academic performance and recognized the limitation of innate ability and environment. Wang (2008) found a different phenomenon in urban China. Urban parents take steps to communicate with teachers in the hope that teachers can help their children more in learning. They often pay a private visit to teachers and send them gifts. Xie and Postiglione's findings (2016) suggested that rural parents had few opportunities to get involved in school activities. Therefore, only parents with advantaged social economic status (SES) background, such as cadres, professionals, and economic elites, can employ *guanxi* (social networks) in the communication between schools and families.

Gu (2008) reviewed research on the changes in parent involvement in China's public schools and found that many public schools in China provided more opportunities and options for parents to get involved, such as "curriculum design, athletic games, picnics, school events, classroom clean-up, fundraising and field trips" (p. 571). Also, new technologies were applied to develop and improve teacher–parent relationships, for example, using telephone calls, e-mails, and newsletters to parents (Chinese Education Resource Support, 2007). There is little empirical research conducted in China that investigates how the market economy influences parent–teacher relationships. This research intends to address this gap by answering the following questions: How do parents communicate with teachers in contemporary China? How do globalization and market economy impact parent–teacher relationships in China?

Method

Data for the study were collected from individual interviews with twenty-one teachers and twenty parents in eight cities in China. The interviews were conducted in Chinese. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview lasted from thirty to one hundred minutes.

Participants

The teacher participants were from Weihai, Jinan, and Zhaoyuan of Shangdong Province, Xinyu of Jiangxi Province, Shunde and Zhuhai of Guangdong Province, Tianjin, and Shanghai. Initially, several participants were recruited via the researchers' personal contacts. The rest were recruited through snowball sampling (Patton, 2015). The parent participants were from Weihai, Qingdao, and Zhaoyuan of Shangdong province, Xinyu of Jiangxi province, Shunde of Guangdong province, Beijing, and Shanghai. All of the parent participants were recruited through personal contacts.

Of the teacher participants, three were male and eighteen were female. All of them held teaching certificates and worked full-time. One of them was a government administrator in charge of education policy research and management; one was the vice principal in a key senior high public school; and the rest worked as teachers at primary, junior high, and senior high schools. All the teacher participants completed post-secondary education, with fourteen holding bachelor's degrees, four master's degrees, and three college diplomas. Their teaching experience varied from six to thirty-two years. Eighteen of them worked at urban schools and three at suburban schools. In addition, eleven participants had the experience of being a head teacher (班主任). Their monthly salary ranged from RMB4000 (about USD600) to RMB10,000 (about USD1500) (see Table 7.1).

As for the parent participants, three were male and seventeen were female. Nineteen of them worked full-time, and one was a housewife. The parent participants were well educated, with eight holding bachelor's degrees, five master's degrees, four with college diplomas, two with high school diplomas, and one with a PhD degree. Their children were from primary to senior high schools. Two were at rural schools, and eighteen were at urban schools. Five parents sent their child to private schools. The parent participants reported about the same range of monthly salary as the teacher participants, except one mother who had her own business and earned millions a year (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.1 Teachers' demographic information

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Position	School	Location	Years of teaching	Monthly income
1	F	41–45	Bachelor	English and head teacher	Primary school	Xinyu, Urban	20	4000–5000
2	F	36–40	Master	Chemistry teacher	Junior high	Zhuhai, Urban	18	7000–8000
3	F	36–40	Bachelor	English teacher and Principal assistant	Junior high	Shanghai, Urban	15	7000–8000
4	F	46–50	College	Chinese and head teacher	Primary school	Xinyu, Suburban	29	4000–5000
5	F	41–45	College	English teacher	Primary school	Zhuhai, suburban	23	6000–7000
6	F	41–45	Bachelor	English teacher	Primary school	Zhuhai, suburban	22	10,000–
7	F	55–	Bachelor	English and head teacher	Senior high	Tianjin, urban	31	5000–6000
8	F	41–45	Bachelor	English teacher	Senior high	Xinyu, urban	18	3000–4000
9	F	51–55	Bachelor	Biology teacher	Senior high	Tianjin, urban	32	5000–6000
10	F	26–30	Bachelor	Political science and head teacher	Junior high	Shunde, urban	6	7000–8000
11	M	36	Bachelor	Administrator				5000–6000
12	M	34	Master	Electric engineering and head teacher	Technology school	Weihai, urban	12	4000–5000
13	F	35	Bachelor	English teacher	Senior high	Jinan, urban	12	5000–6000
14	F	35	Bachelor	Political science teacher	Senior high	Jinan, urban	14	5000–6000
15	M	35	Bachelor	Political science and head teacher	Senior high	Weihai, urban	14	5000–6000
16	F	33	Bachelor	Chinese and head teacher	Private primary school	Weihai, urban	10	4000–5000

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Position	School	Location	Years of teaching	Monthly income
17	F	45	Master	Principal	Senior high	Weihai, urban	15	7000–8000
18	F	40	Master	Physics and head teacher	Senior high	Zhaoyuan, urban	17	5000–6000
19	F	40	Bachelor	Math and head teacher	Primary school	Zhaoyuan, urban	23	4000–5000
20	F	34	Bachelor	History and head teacher	Junior high	Zhaoyuan, suburban	11	5000–6000
21	F	39	College	Chinese and head teacher	Junior high	Weihai, urban	20	4000–5000

Table 7.2 Parents' demographic information

No.	Gender	Age	Education	Position	Child's school	Location	Monthly income
1	F	36–40	Bachelor	Government staff	Grade 8	Xinyu, urban	4000–5000
2	F	36–40	Bachelor	Government staff	Private Grade 3	Shunde, urban	7000–8000
3	M	36–40	Master	Government official	Private Grade 4	Shunde, urban	10,000–
4	F	36–40	Bachelor	Teacher	Grade 1	Xinyu, urban	4000–5000
5	F	41–45	College	Company staff	Private Grade 9	Shunde, urban	5000–6000
6	F	31–35	Bachelor	Marketing manager	Grade 2	Shanghai, urban	10,000–
7	F	36–40	Bachelor		Private Grade 1	Shanghai, urban	
8	F	41–45	Bachelor	Marketing Director	Private Grade 4	Shanghai, urban	10,000–
9	M	41–45	Master	Editor	Grade 9	Beijing, urban	10,000–
10	F	41–45	Master	Company staff	Grade 1	Beijing, urban	10,000–
11	F	36	Bachelor	Military	Grade 2	Beijing, urban	8000–9000
12	F	40	Bachelor	Quality manager	Grade 9	Beijing, urban	10,000–
13	F	37	College	Self-employed	Grade 5	Zhaoyuan, suburban	5000–6000
14	M	42	PhD	Professor	Grade 7	Weihai, urban	8000–9000
15	F	34	Master	Instructor	K and Grade 6	Weihai, urban	6000–7000
16	F	35	Master	Instructor	Grade 4	Weihai, urban	6000–7000
17	F	45	College	Office secretary	Grade 11	Zhaoyuan, urban	4000–5000
18	F	46	College	Boss	Grade10 and graduate	Weihai, suburban	10,000–
19	F	40	High school	Farmer	Grade 10 and 4	Qingdao, suburban	3000–4000
20	F	36	High school	Worker	Grade 1	Weihai, urban	3000–4000

Findings and Analysis

Daily Communication Between Teachers and Parents via WeChat (微信)

One of the benefits that teacher and parent participants reported is using the new technology for daily communication. The advancement of technology in the Internet, Wi-fi, and smart phones has significantly changed the way of communication between teachers and parents in China. In the past, teachers and parents communicated mainly by phone, agenda books, or face-to-face meetings. Sometimes, teachers visited students' home to learn more about the students' family situation and their activities at home. In this way, teachers tend to steer the communication between home and school and parents became passive participants.

In recent years, teachers and parents have turned to instant chatting software such as QQ (similar to Skype) as well as School Texting Platform (家校信息平台) to communicate with each other. The School Texting Platform only allows one-way communication from teachers to parents. Most teachers used QQ to send daily homework to parents. Parents refrained themselves from responding to teachers. Even though QQ allows two-way communication, in practice parents became receivers of homework. In 2011, WeChat, a mobile app, was invented by a Chinese company in China. Due to the feature of WeChat that requires identification of communicators, WeChat has gradually replaced QQ and School Texting Platform to become the most popular means for parent–teacher communication.

WeChat has the advantages of its fast pace and convenience in sharing different kinds of information among a group. Usually, a homeroom teacher (班主任) creates a chatting group and invites all the subject teachers and parents whose students are in the same class to join the group. In this way, both teachers and parents can send and reply to messages instantly. The following quote shows how WeChat enables parents and teachers to interact on a daily basis and keep parents updated on their child's activities at school:

> 我们有个微信群…基本上老师每天都会在上面跟我们互动的。 发一些小朋友上课的视频片段啊, 图片啊, 如果涉及到小孩个人问题的话, 他会一对一的。如果我有什么问题, 也可以跟老师微信沟通。(P3, 顺德, 小学)
>
> We have a WeChat group… The teachers communicate with us every day. In the WeChat group, they post videos of lessons or pictures. If it is about an individual student, the teacher will chat one-on-one with the parent. If I have any questions, I can also contact the teacher via WeChat anywhere anytime. (P3, Shunde, Elementary)

The above quote shows multimodality of communication between parents and teachers via WeChat. They can send voice or written messages, share information from the Internet, and attach photographs and videos instantly. Group chat is convenient for teachers to send students' daily homework notification, bad weather alerts, emergency, or school event notices. It also allows teachers and parents to share resources. Teachers use this channel to address topics of interest to parents, such as "how to

communicate with your children?" "What do you do with your teenagers' rebellion?" Group chat also enables parents who were reluctant to attend parent–teacher conferences due to their low level of education in the past to participate in their communication with teachers. Besides, parents and teachers can also initiate a one-on-one private chat. This is very useful when the teacher wants to discuss with a parent about his/her child's performance or vice versa. Particularly, the teacher uses the private chat to discuss some students' misbehaviors or other concerns.

WeChat also enhances the communication among parents. In the past, parents met each other only at the parents' meeting which was held once or twice every semester. Even when they were at the parents' meeting, many of them did not have the chance to talk to each other because most of the time, they would be sitting in the classroom listening to the teachers' reports on the students' performance in each major subject such as Chinese, maths, and English. However, with the chatting group on WeChat, the parents communicate more frequently and cooperate more efficiently, as is shown in the following quote:

> 比方说学校要买个小笤帚, 然后家长说我现在正好在小商店, 我就一块全买了。… 我们还专门有一个人管账, 每人上次刚交了 50 块钱的班费, 会计直接把钱就划给那个买东西的人很方便。… 我觉得现在这个群真的是挺好的, 家长之间互相沟通很方便。我们在家长的姓名后面加上电话号码沟通起来就更方便。(T20, 威海, 初中)
>
> For example, a teacher asked children to bring some brooms to school. When a parent read the message on WeChat, she happened to be in a grocery store, so she bought the brooms for all the children in the class…We have a parent who volunteered as the accountant for the class and managed the class expenses, so the accountant just transferred the money to the parent who bought the brooms through WeChat from the class expenses collected from the parents…The chatting groups are very convenient for communication among parents. We even added parents' phone number after their name and then the communication became easier. (T20, Weihai, Junior high)

The above quote shows that WeChat enables communicators to transfer money instantly. One parent bought all the brooms for the children. In this way, she saved other parents time and made it easier for the teacher. WeChat allows parents and teachers to build a mass network. Moreover, WeChat allows teachers to capitalize on parents' resources, knowledge, and talent. For example, a parent who is an expert on robots brought a dancing robot to perform for the children in the class. The children were delighted to dance with the robot. The parent also taught the children basic coding systems about how the robot operates. This activity inspired some children to become creators of robots in the future. At the same time, this finding should be treated with caution because those parents are highly educated, middle-class parents who can afford to get away from work during the day.

The WeChat groups can be understood as a form of social capital. The more active a parent is in communicating with the teachers and other parents, the more information they would get and the better relationships they would build with the teachers. This adds to the parents' social capital in relation to the education of their child, which would then contribute to the child's cultural capital. Yet the new technology also has a negative side. Not all of the parents have access to these chatting tools or are free to check, respond to, and share information online all the time. One challenge

is that parents in rural areas may not have access to WeChat or may not know how to use them. Also, when parents work in cities and leave their children to the care of the grandparents in villages, the grandparents usually do not use the online chatting tools. This result is consistent with the findings of Mu and Hu (2016) who found that left-behind children were left to the care of grandparents, some of whom were illiterate and did not know how to use WeChat. Another challenge is that parents whose work conditions do not allow access to online chatting apps during work such as factory workers, as we can see from the quote below:

> 整天早上去上班的那些也不行, 就是工人。一般就是机关事业单位的比较闲, 他班上都有电脑, 这个比较方便。(T18, 招远, 高中)
>
> Parents who work in factories can't use online communication. Only those in administrative institutions who have time and access to the Internet would often use online communication. (T18, Zhaoyuan, Senior high)

Therefore, while we acknowledge the positive role that modern technology has played in facilitating parent–teacher communication, it is also important to note the inequality in social capital it has widened among different groups of parents. Parents whose family and work conditions allow them to take advantage of the online chat tools would build more social and cultural capital for their child, while those in rural areas or working in labor-intensive industries would be further alienated and marginalized. This result is consistent with the findings of Papapolydorou (2015) who found inequalities among middle- and working-class parents. She suggested that middle-class parents whose social capital, alongside culture, symbolic, and economic capital enable them to mobilize their social network in interacting with the school (Bourdieu, 1986).

Changes in Parent Involvement Models

Beyond daily communication with teachers, parents in this study were also actively involved in their children's education at school. They helped teachers organize all kinds of activities outside class, which brought closer connections between school and family education:

> 就比如说现在中秋节了, 有些家长组织小朋友去某个地方学习做月饼, 或者说上个学期我们有家长是在消防局工作的, 他就可能会在老师的带领下, 全班同学去消防局学习消防知识, 然后有家长在卫生部门的, 就可以组织小朋友去学习一些急救知识。这些活动班主任都会记录下来, 在学校的网站上公布, 这对老师的教学工作也是很有帮助的, 对老师在学校得到认可也是有帮助的。(P5, 顺德, 小学)
>
> For example, it is now around the Moon Festival, so some parents took the children to a special place to learn how to make mooncakes. Last term, one of the parents worked at the fire station, then he arranged a tour for the whole class to the fire station to learn about firefighting knowledge. If a parent worked in the health department, she then organized activities for the children to learn first-aid. All these activities were recorded by the head teacher and posted on the school website. They helped to reduce the teachers' workload. They would also help to promote the recognition of the teacher's performance. (P5, Shunde, elementary school)

In contrast to the findings of Gu (2008) and Lau et al. (2011), which suggested that Chinese parents were more likely to engage in learning-related activities at home rather than in school, parents in this study were also actively engaged in their child's education in school. Although Chinese teachers did not encourage parents to participate in decision-making about school governance (Gu & Yawkey, 2010), parents in this study attempted to influence the appointment of teachers. Parents had a discussion among themselves in WeChat groups and then put forward a collective request:

> 比如说我们有一个学期生活老师换了，　然后我们群里面一些家长可能就知道这个老师的情况，比如说她在别的年级做的可能口碑不太好啊，对小孩子比较粗暴啊，或者体育老师对小孩子有些不太好的行为的时候，我们都会反映的，都会要求班主任出面协商解决的。比如要求更换老师啊，或者要求老师改正啊，等等。(P6，顺德，小学)
>
> For example, some parents heard from other parents in another grade about the bad reputation of a new life teacher, such as her rude behavior towards students. Another case would be when a physical education teacher treated our children inappropriately. We made requests to the head teacher to replace the teacher or ensure the teacher would rectify his/her behavior. (P6, Shunde, elementary school)

From the schools' side, there have been encouragements on parents' involvement in different ways. For example, some schools have parent councils at the school level whose responsibilities include assisting in the arrangement of school events such as sports meet, lunch supervision, and participating in school management including changing school timetables. Comparatively speaking, private schools take a more proactive approach toward parents' involvement. A parent in Shanghai described how well she was informed about her son's performance at school and how it helped her to be more effectively involved in her son's education:

> 他们的老师跟幼儿园的老师很类似，不像在公立学校，小学老师跟幼儿园老师是完全不同的风格，可能根本不关心你的生活，孩子的情绪啊，每天就教做功课什么的。他们就不是这样。现在一年级，老师就会每天告诉家长孩子在学校有些什么变化，做了些什么事情。有时候会告诉我们孩子今天有情绪的起伏，那可能晚上妈妈要多陪他一会儿啊。比如是今天上了武术课啊，孩子们很高兴啊，然后拍些照片给我们看。(P7，上海，小学)
>
> Their teachers are like teachers in kindergarten. In public schools, teachers focus on children's academic achievements but do not care about their life and emotions. Teachers in private schools are different. Now in Grade One, the teacher will tell every parent the changes his/her child has at school, what they did at school. Sometimes the teacher would tell us your kid had emotional changes at school, so maybe the mom needed to spend more time with the child in that evening. Or if they have the Chinese martial arts class and the kids were happy, the teacher would upload pictures for us to see. (P7, Shanghai, Elementary)

Meanwhile, it should be noted that these changes in parents' involvement took place mainly in urban schools and among families that possessed sufficient economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Shunde and Shanghai belong to the most developed areas in China, and the parent participants quoted above all had at least a bachelor's degree. They not only cared more about their child's education, but also financially and culturally invested more in it. They were willing to spend a lot money to send their children to a private school. Besides, field trips to a fire station or a health

department were only possible when the class had some parents who either worked in these departments or knew someone well there. In these cases, parents were using their social networks to support their child's education and build a good relationship with the teachers. This finding supports Papapolydorou's (2015) argument:

> parental social capital, in relation to Bourdieu's framework, was seen as comprising the social networks possessed by parents and the participation and/or membership of parents in associations that might benefit their children's education, for example their educational achievements and opportunities (p. 85).

In comparison, parents in rural areas or having relatively low level education and poor financial conditions tend to have no or little involvement in the child's education both at school and at home. A teacher participant who worked at a rural school in Zhuhai compared the parents in urban schools and in her school as below:

> 因为城区家长素质比较高，而且有时间，一般都有周六日，或者平时也有假期，或者有些家庭条件好的，妈妈不用上班的，也有文化的，那些就有很多志愿者，她会去到学校给小孩讲故事，然后还会帮忙做教室文化布置啊，表演啊。但是郊区学校的家长大部分素质不是很高，卖菜的啊，在工厂打工的啊，做小生意的啊，文化程度不是很高，为生活奔波花的时间比较多。对待小孩这方面，教育的方法也很有问题，一方面很溺爱，一方面要么打要么骂。(T9, 珠海, 小学)
>
> Parents in urban areas appear to be educated, well-mannered, and they have free time. Generally speaking, they do not need to work on weekends and during public holidays, or some families have good financial conditions so that the mothers do not need to work. They would volunteer at school such as telling stories, helping with classroom decorations or class performances. However, parents in the suburban do not seem to have those qualities mentioned above. They are venders in the vet market, factory workers, or doing small businesses. Their education is not high, and they spend a lot of time earning a living. They do not know how to treat their children, either spoiling them or scolding or using corporal punishment. (T9, Zhuhai, elementary)

In China, students have homework every day. Parents who have low level education face the challenge of supporting their child in both academic subjects and personal growth. For example, an English teacher participant said that parents who did not know English could only help to make sure that the child listened to or read the assigned English text at home, but they did not know if the child's pronunciation was correct or if the child understood the meaning of the text correctly.

Some rural parents migrated to cities for jobs, and their children were left behind under the care of their grandparents, who might be illiterate. They agreed that their grandparents could not provide homework supervision or emotional support to their children. Similarly, in Mu and Hu's (2016) study, they found the grandparents of left-behind children were diffident about their homework supervision capacity due to the low-level education. Rural parents in this study also agreed that their communication with teachers was limited. Their children were at particular risk of emotional and academic difficulties. A teacher confirmed such views:

> 一般来说，他们的成绩要差一些，性格也会有所差异。有的留守儿童会比较内向，有种缺失了父爱母爱的感觉。甚至他们看到别的孩子的父母来接他们，他们心里会有种失落感。学习习惯会比较不好，做作业拖拖拉拉，因为没有人监督，甚至不交作业的也有。(T10, 新余, 小学)

> Generally speaking, their marks are lower than other students, and there are differences in personality as well. Some left-behind children would become introverted, feeling a lack of parents' love. They would feel a sense of loss when they see other students' parents picking them up at school. They tend to have poor study habits and submit their homework late because of lack of supervision. Some do not even hand in homework. (T10, Xinyu, elementary)

This study confirms earlier research about differences in parental involvement between urban and rural settings in China (Chi & Rao, 2003; Wang, 2008). This study shows a widening gap between the amount of time, efforts, and the patterns that parents get involved in their children's education between urban and rural areas (Y. Guo, 2016). Parents in the rural areas remain largely non-involved. For those who have to leave the child to the care of the grandparents, they are not only non-involved in the child's study, but also the emotional growth of the child, consistent with the findings of previous studies (Mu & Hu, 2016). On the contrary, parents in the urban areas, especially those who have better financial resources and more free time, are able to take advantage of the diverse opportunities prompted by the market economy such as private schools and private tutoring to help their children accumulate social and cultural capital. They are more involved in their children's education both at home and at school.

Changes in Parent–Teacher Relationships

Despite the frequent communication and parent involvement in school, teacher participants felt that parents in this study utilized pragmatic approcahes to parent-teacher relationships. China has a long history of valuing education and respecting teachers. Having a good education has long been regarded as an important stepping stone to a successful career and a better life in China. As a matter of fact, this is still the predominant view among Chinese parents nowadays. However, the market economy has brought significant changes to the parent–teacher relationships. Some people were able to grasp the opportunities in the market economy and became rich quickly. This led to the belief that education was not necessary to gain wealth and a bright future. As a result, some wealthy parents tend to devalue education as well as teachers:

> 有些家长就是说我自己小时候读书，成绩就不好，现在我发了财，我比你老师挣的钱多，我的孩子虽然现在成绩也不好，有可能我的孩子今后也会发财，赚的钱有可能比我多，所以家长不一定会去跟老师沟通…他就不把老师放在眼里。多次学校老师叫家长去，他就是不去，烦了连老师的电话都不接。等于是他都把老师和家长的关系倒置了。所以这就是市场经济的冲击力，所以老师的地位就是会下降。(P1，新余，初中)

> Some parents think that when they were students, they did not get good marks. However, now that they are richer than the teachers. Although their child does not achieve good grades now, maybe in the future their child will become rich as well, maybe richer than their parents. Thus, these parents may not communicate with the teachers…They do not treat the teachers seriously. They do not go to meet the teachers when they are asked. They even do not bother to answer the teachers' phone calls. They reverse the relationship between parents and teachers.

This is the impact of market economy. That's why teachers' status has decreased. (P1, Xinyu, Junior high)

Under the planned economy, all the schools were state owned. Teaching was a secure and permanent job. Teachers' income came from their salary. They may spend extra time after class helping students with their study, but they regarded it as part of their responsibility and would not charge students for extra money. As a result, teachers were highly respected. However, the introduction of market economy, especially the emergence of private tutoring, has turned education into an industry. Wealthy Chinese parents in the present study sent their children to private tutoring lessons or one-on-one tutoring. Some teachers tutored their own students after school hours even though it is either legally prohibited or publicly discouraged by the local Education Bureau. Silova (2010) argued that as private tutoring is expensive, it is not accessible to all students, and "it can create disparities in student achievement" (p. 334). Private tutoring provides an opportunity for teachers to generate additional income. In this way, teachers are complicit in their erosion of their social position because they turn teaching into a commodity (Y. Guo, 2016). Moreover, on traditional festivals or holidays such as the Moon Festival and Teachers' Day, some teachers accepted gifts from the parents in various forms such as moon cakes, gift cards, or cash. According to the parents in the study, they gave gifts to teachers because of a fear:

以前家长把老师看得高高在上的那种, 现在是完全都不存在了。说句不好听的话吧, 他不看不起你就已经很不错了。家长对于老师与其说是尊敬不如说是有点畏惧。这种畏惧来自于什么呢? 就是害怕孩子在学校里受到不公平的待遇。(T13, 济南, 高中)

In the past, parents highly respected teachers. This has completely changed nowadays. To put it bluntly, I feel good if they do not look down on teachers. I'd say that they rather fear than respect teachers. Where does this fear come from? It is from their concern that their child may not be treated fairly at school. (T13, Jinan, Senior high)

The act of accepting gifts from parents can invite corruption. Some teachers may treat students whose parents give gifts better than other students. In these circumstances, parents may be placed under pressure to invest in expensive gifts for teachers. This not only has increased inequality in the distribution of cultural capital between students from rich and poor families, but, more importantly, has changed parents' attitude toward teachers. As a teacher participant observed, parents nowadays have become more pragmatic:

我觉得以前非常尊师重教, 比如说以前的学生对老师的感情特别至深至爱, 那个时候也没有家教, 老师对学生也很真诚。现在风气也不太好了, 家长现在和老师处关系, 就是现在是你的学生的时候跟你处好关系, 学生一走就没关系了。比较功利。(T7, 天津, 高中)

I feel in the past there was much respect for teachers and great emphasis on education. For example, in the past, students had very deep and sincere love towards their teachers. At that time, there were no tutors, and the teachers treated the students sincerely as well. Now the social environment is not that good. The relationship between parents and teachers is like when my child is your student, I will keep a good relationship with you. Once my child is not your student any more, the relationship is over. It is very pragmatic. (T7, Tianjin, Senior high)

Besides receiving gifts from parents, some administrators and teachers capitalized on parents' social networks. For example, a parent gave a gift to a teacher, but the teacher returned the gift to the parent. Later, the school principal asked this parent who is a university computer instructor to tutor his son in a college computer course free of charge. In return, the teacher paid more attention to this parent's child. This example shows the relationships between parents and teachers become more pragmatic.

Another finding from the study is that there are differences in parent–teacher relationships between public and private schools. The changes mentioned above are based on the participants' experience with public schools. Parent participants who sent their child to private schools were all satisfied with their relationships with the teachers. According to them, teachers at private schools generally received higher salary and had stronger service orientation. Besides, the private schools had more rigorous management and made it clear that teachers were not allowed to accept presents from parents or offer paid tutoring to students. From the parents' side, they felt that they deserved a good service from the school and the teachers because they paid a high tuition fee. Hence, their communication with the teachers tended to be more frequent and more specific:

> 私立小学老师跟家长的沟通多很多 …跟家长的沟通以及学校组织的活动这些方面, 公立学校是没得比的。…我自己就觉得花了这么多的学费, 把小孩子送到私立小学, 就是要这样的服务。所以我不会担心打扰老师。(P2, 顺德, 小学)
>
> There is a lot more communication with parents at private schools…Public school cannot compete with private schools in terms of communication with parents and the activities organized by the schools…I feel that I spent so much money to send my child to a private school, so what I need is exactly such a service. I will not worry about disturbing the teachers. (P2, Shunde, Elementary)

New Challenges on Parent–Teacher Relationships

Beyond pragmatic approaches to parent-teacher relationships, participants also reported other challenges which threatened relationships. One challenge was that parents and teachers seemed to pursue different educational goals and had different ways to discipline students. An important principle that goes with the reform and opening-up policy is the emancipation of people's mind. This encourages parents to have different purposes of education and different ways to educate their children. Moreover, young parents, especially those who were born after the 1980s, received higher education than previous generations. They tend to have a more open and liberal attitude toward their children's education. Unlike parents of older generations who mainly focused on their children academic achievements, they pay attention to their children's both academic achievements and personal growth. As a result, these young parents are also more likely to challenge teachers' authority than in the past. As a teacher participant noticed:

> 和我年纪差不多的家长, 对教育的认识都是一样的, 希望孩子在学校里学得好, 开心, 但是我觉得到了80后, 90后, 00后, 对教育的目标也许追求得不一样了。最简单的问题,

比如说孩子上课讲话, 他们觉得是个性的张扬, 但是老师觉得这是在扰乱课堂纪律, 当你批评他孩子的时候, 家长会觉得老师过分。(T8, 新余, 高中)

Parents who are of the same age as me (mid 40 s) have the same perception on education. We hope the child would study well and be happy at school. However, I feel parents born after the 80s are pursuing different educational goals. For example, when students talked in class, the parents thought it was the display of the child's personality, but the teacher thought he disrupted the class. When you criticized the child for this disruptive behaviour, the parents would think the teacher had gone too far. (T8, Xinyu, Senior high)

How to respond to parents' different opinions toward the treatment of students' behavior at school has become a new challenge for the teachers. If handled inappropriately, a small conflict may turn into a serious dispute. This would hurt both the parents' and teachers' feelings and damage the trust that has long been built up between the two parties. As we can see, there have already been cases that parents skipped the teachers and went directly to the school principals or even the local Education Bureau to complain about the teachers. Moreover, there is a lack of resources that help parents deal with their complaints, nor a clear procedure to ensure fair investigation and decision. As a result, teachers tend to take a passive attitude toward educating students, especially their behavior, to avoid conflicts. Unlike in the past, they dare not to criticize or physically punish the students. As a teacher participant commented, "由于社会经济的发展, 学校的观念和家长的观念会有分歧, 不像以前, 所以做班主任这个工作风险越来越大了." ("Due to the economic development, there have been conflicts in the perceptions between the school and the parents, which is different from the past. Therefore, there have been more risks in the job of head teacher.") In our research, a teacher participant mentioned the following incident:

然后班主任就在群里跟家长说, 数学老师说他颈椎不好, 自己主动提出来不想上两个班了。因为他是那个班的班主任, 就不想上我们这个班了。家长都挺生气的, 因为那时候4年级快毕业了。然后在群里有比较主动的, 一块联系了那么十个八个的家长去找校长。跟校长说了好几次, 他一直应付, 一直没有给个说法。然后那天就直接上教育局去了。最后那个老师说你们别去找了, 我给你们上到4年级毕业。(P3, 招远, 小学)

Then the head teacher told parents in the chatting group on WeChat that the math teacher had problems with his cervical spine, so he didn't want to teach two classes. Because he was the head teacher of the other class, he wanted to quit this class. Parents were quite angry, since it was close to the end of grade four. Then some active parents in the chatting group contacted about ten parents, and went to raise their concern to the principal together. After several times, the principal still hadn't given a solution. Then they went directly to the Education Bureau. Finally, the math teacher told parents he would keep teaching till the end of grade four. (P3, Zhaoyuan, Elementary)

A parent who owned a wedding services company brought his own video camera to the principal's office. He threatened to video record the meeting between the parents and the principal if the principal did not take actions. This is another example that comes in direct contrast to the finding of Gu (2008). It shows that parents in this study were actively engaged in decision-making process in school by mobilizing their social networks.

Conclusion and Implications

This study reveals changes in parent–teacher relationships in China's market economy from four aspects. Firstly, the development of new technology facilitates a faster, more convenient, more frequent, and more diverse communication between parents and teachers. At the same time, there are issues of unequal access and increasing inequality between urban and rural students. Secondly, parents are more actively involved in their child's school education, especially at the lower grades. This school-based involvement model expands Gu's (2008) two traditional models: no involvement and home-based involvement. Families with high economic, cultural, and social capital are advantaged in supporting their child's education than poor families. Thirdly, the market economy has shaken the high social status that teachers enjoyed in the past and teachers' knowledge has become commodified. This leads to a more pragmatic relationship between parents and teachers. Finally, parents are more likely to challenge teachers' authority than in the past, and there have been more serious conflicts between parents and teachers. Findings in our study challenge stereotyping assumptions towards Chinese parents who are not involved or only involved in their children's education at home (Gu, 2008; Lau, Li, & Rao, 2011). Our study shows that contemporary Chinese parents are actively involved in their children's education both at home and at school. They provide homework supervision and emotional support to their children at home as well as volunteer at school and participate in school management such as influencing the appointment of teachers. The study also highlights some of the creative ways technology in China is being used to enable meaningful communication and learning between parents and teachers. At the same time, it shows how China's market economy is widening gaps between families, especially those able to pay for tuition of their children and those unable to afford it. These rare insights highlight current and emerging dangers to parent-teacher engagement with relevance to other countries.

The findings in this study have implications for both educators and policymakers in China. To begin with, despite the benefits of new technology, educators cannot neglect face-to-face communication with parents, especially those who remain silent in the class chatting group or have no access to the new communication tools. Schools should also provide support for parents who do not know how to use the new technology. In addition, as parent–teacher communication is moving from one-way to two-way communication, it is important for schools and Education Bureaus to provide training and support to teachers so that they know how to effectively communicate with parents and how to deal with conflicting situations. Parents should also be allowed to address their concerns through adequate channels. As well, they should be encouraged to provide information about their children's extracurricular activities and emotional well-being outside the school so that the teachers and parents can work more closely on the development of the whole child. Finally, it is important that policymakers take measures to protect the rights of the teachers, the students, and their parents to promote an equal and healthy parent–teacher relationships in the new market economy situation.

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Chapter 8
Social Equity and Home–School Collaboration in Multicultural Early Years' Education—A Hong Kong Perspective

Celeste Y. M. Yuen

Abstract Students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are the fastest growing groups across all school levels, especially in kindergartens in Hong Kong. The challenge for teachers to work with parents from diverse cultures has become more pressing than ever. This chapter discusses the importance of home–school collaboration in multicultural early years' education. Grounded in empirical evidence, this study first reports the findings of a need analysis with regard to the intercultural teacher professional development associated with the changing student demographic landscape. It then discusses the impediments in place towards engaging South Asian ethnic minority and Chinese cross-boundary parents in their children's learning. Finally, it explores how intercultural teacher education and home–school collaboration can address the perceived issues and improve the situation.

Keywords Home–school collaboration · Chinese cross-boundary parents
South Asian ethnic minority · Intercultural teacher education
Multicultural early years' education

Introduction

Despite human diversity being a general phenomenon in schools across the globe, many teachers still see such diversity as an obstacle to their teaching rather than as a potential strength (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Smith et al., 1997). Voluminous studies on home–school–community partnerships (Adair & Barraza, 2014; Jeynes, 2014; Jones, 2013; Dyson, 2001) have called for increased professional acknowledgement of the crucial role of families. Parental involvement in schooling can be a powerful resource for policy advocacy and parental counselling (Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015). Active

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parental involvement contributes to children's academic success (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Jeynes, 2014; Kim, 2002) and is essential to their socio-emotional competence and psychological well-being (Wong-Lo & Bai, 2013). Effective partnership between the immediate family and the external environment, such as school and community, is recognized as a key success factor towards positive child development within mainstream society (Shaffer & Kipp, 2014). Studies also show that active parental involvement from the early years' links with better cognitive development. This would seem to be especially remarkable with regard to children from minority families (Jeynes, 2014). Indeed, parental engagement in the education of immigrant children plays an essential role in early childhood, and the effect can last through primary and secondary school (Park & McHugh, 2014).

Early years' education is a springboard for children making the move to primary school and exerts lasting influence on his or her life (Jeynes, 2014). For immigrant families, this is also a significant and challenging stage for their children to integrate into the new society and to search for their sense of belonging (Romero, 2008). During the transition from home learning to formal schooling, immigrant children are vulnerable and sensitive to people's attitudes towards them as they seek to adapt to their new social environment. When navigating the new educational system, it can be confusing and sometimes conflicting for the immigrant child to comprehend the sudden change of cultural experiences and to adjust from one institution to the other. Hindered by the mainstream language and limited social networks, they may be shy to express themselves and passive in participating in school activities. Acquiring a new language, forming new friendships and getting familiarized with the new school environment are just a few of the challenges facing these young minds (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). It is no surprise, then, that they usually take longer to adjust, to learn and even to excel in schools compared to their native counterparts. Social isolation and loneliness are the common experiences for many immigrant children regardless of their racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Kirova & Wu, 2002). This being said, Borjian and Padilla (2010) warn that teachers have no excuse for underestimating these students' abilities or lowering their expectations. Acceptance by teachers, either through words or action, a smile, a hug, comfort and encouragement can make a big difference to this process of transition (Adair & Barraza, 2014).

The many social layers involved demand careful attention for understanding the nature of the school engagement of immigrant children. However, a professional attitude and the right support from teachers does not appear to come naturally as teachers may not have the requisite knowledge of the home language, culture and traditions of their immigrant students. Immigrant parents often voice concern about the lack of time given by teachers to assist their children to make the necessary adjustments to learning and friendship formation during the school transition. They wish teachers could be more patient and accepting during this beginning period (Adams & Shambleau, 2007). Indeed, Rao and Yuen (2006) accentuate that when immigrant children enter preschool or kindergarten, teachers are important socializers in their process of adjustment to the new society. Without strong socio-emotional support from teachers, children feel isolated and unwelcomed at school, and this may negatively impact their emotional and cognitive patterns (Adams & Shambleau, 2007).

To maximize the potentialities of immigrant students without causing delay, teachers are advised to work with parents from diverse backgrounds and treat them as co-teachers in developing their children's abilities (Smith et al., 1997). Therefore, teachers should not only focus on helping young children to get familiarized with their new learning requirements, but should also strive to create a comfortable and pleasant learning environment to embrace them.

Challenges of Home–School Collaboration in Early Years

Researchers are also aware of the many barriers against the establishment of such family–school partnerships (Sohn & Wang, 2006). Among others, the language problem has long been regarded as a main barrier that negatively impacts communication between immigrant parents and teachers (Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010). How to narrow the gap between parents and teachers by recruiting bilingual volunteers from parents or other school personnel is a real challenge. According to Sinkkonen and Kyttälä (2014), school assistants of similar cultural backgrounds are considered useful and effective for the learning and integration of multicultural students.

When working with immigrant parents, teachers are advised to be sensitive to the impacts of external factors, such as their workplace, extended family members, social networks and neighbourhood-community relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Vidali and Adams (2006) found that most immigrant parents demonstrated higher rates of depression and lower self-efficacy because of the stressful transition period. This is compounded by the fact they usually work long hours and find little time to communicate with children and teachers. This is a real issue faced by most immigrant families from the low socio-economic status (SES). Such factors impede engagement with their children's education and magnify the negative effect on their children's adjustment to the new educational and social environments.

Another impediment is the biases and stereotypes of teachers towards these parents. For instance, due to cultural differences, school personnel may misinterpret the absence of immigrant parents from school activities as indifference to their children's education, without realizing that the passive engagement of immigrant parents according to their culture can be a sign of deference (Jones, 2013). Peterson and Ladky (2007) warn that misunderstandings between parents and teachers have a negative impact on teacher–parent collaboration. On the one hand, teachers will be demotivated to reach out to the parents, whilst on the other, parents may take it as discrimination, leading to further alienation from school affairs.

The Hong Kong Study

Recent demographic changes in early years' education in Hong Kong have stimulated much public discussion on its quality and inclusivity. In particular, there are serious concerns with regard to parental involvement and the accessibility of information on education for Chinese immigrant and ethnic minority parents (Yuen, 2011). These parents tend to be remote from mainstream society and the education system and often feel inadequate in making the right decision for their children's education. Commensurate with the growing clamour for an equal and equitable society, this study is a timely response to provide evidence-based recommendations for intercultural teacher professional development, with a focus on home–school collaboration. Ethnic minority South Asian (SA) students, known as non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students and cross-boundary students (CBS) from Mainland China are some of the fastest growing groups in Hong Kong schools. The majority of NCS are Pakistani, Nepalese, Indian and Filipino children whose mother tongue is not Chinese and who are from low SES families. By contrast, CBS refers to students who were born and study in Hong Kong but who live in mainland China. They include students whose parents are not Hong Kong permanent residents, students who have one parent who is a Hong Kong permanent resident, and students from Hong Kong families who for various reasons reside in Chinese boundary towns. All these students have the right of abode in Hong Kong and are entitled to health, education and other public welfare the same as their mainstream peers (Yuen, 2010).

Between the school years of 2010/2011 and 2017/2018, the number of NCS in mainstream schooling increased from 11,192 to 12,409 in kindergarten, 7237–9622 in primary and 5236–9383 in secondary. Likewise, the CBS rose from 3786 to 4610 in kindergarten, 4575–19,215 in primary and 1538–4084 in secondary. However, figures show that only 35% of kindergartens have admitted 10 or more students from ethnic minority families, indicating that the majority of school personnel are foreign to multicultural classrooms (Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), 2016). Additionally, most teachers in Hong Kong are ethnic Chinese trained to teach in ethnically homogenous classrooms (Yuen, 2015). This cultural gap between teachers and students continues to create challenges to the teacher community. Educating culturally diverse students effectively has become a professional challenge to teachers, especially those from schools with a high concentration of NCS and/or CBS.

The Changing Education Landscape

With the recent implementation of 15-year free and compulsory education (Hong Kong Government, 2016), kindergartens are at the forefront of receiving increasing numbers of immigrant and minority children. Concerns over the readiness and effectiveness of school personnel in accommodating the multiple needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds have been raised (Hong Kong Unison, 2012;

Yuen, 2013; 2015). For example, some NCS were rejected by kindergartens because of their failure in speaking Cantonese (the mainstream dialect). In response, the EOC (2016) issued a guidance booklet to reiterate the legal obligations of childcare centres, kindergartens and schools to provide quality education services to all students from diverse backgrounds. The booklet has also reassured the immigrant and minority families of their children's right to receive non-discriminatory education in Hong Kong. In this sense, the booklet was a step forward towards realizing an equal society by acknowledging cultural diversity within society and through supporting the immigrant and minority families in the education system. But unless such insights are properly embraced and acted upon by schools, the intended outcome will not be yielded.

Chinese immigrant and South Asian minority families in Hong Kong, in their economic struggles, can be largely invisible in schools (The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2013). Language and cultural familiarities naturally draw such parents together into ethnic clusters, for they have a genuine need to support one another in a new society. When professional support is scarce and language is a problem, same-ethnic community plays a significant role in rendering emotional and social support. One aspect of this is that parents tend to seek advice from their same-ethnic friends and relatives especially in choosing schools for their young children. Consequently, most NCS congregate in certain schools. The same is also true for CBS. This phenomenon can be regarded as a typical exemplar of the lack of informed choice among these parents.

In recent years, teachers with frequent contact with immigrant and minority students have initiated more activities like home visits or person-to-person conversations with their parents than in the past. These are helpful with regard to gathering more information about the likes and dislikes of immigrants and their abilities. A useful contribution has been made by the policy advocacy of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong to protect the rights of the parents (Hong Kong Unison, 2012; Oxfam Hong Kong, 2014). Two-way communication between parents and teachers is crucial to the process of building partnerships. Schools are encouraged to create a welcoming ethos in which immigrant families can share their knowledge and where different cultures are valued. Similarly, creating a positive school culture is also important, as students who feel respected and valued at school will also learn more actively. Schools can provide workshops for teachers to learn more about immigrants and their culture, values and beliefs. Meanwhile, workshops can also be offered to parents to enhance their parenting skills in working efficiently with schools. Immigrant parents who are unfamiliar with the new school system and culture will benefit from these and related talks. They will also be interested in knowing how the school system works, what roles they can play within the school decision making, and how they can help with their children's academic learning.

Professional Development Needs: Issues and Challenges

Researchers have noted that home culture correlates with students' emotional resilience and academic achievements, and as such is a compelling reason for early home–school collaboration (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, & Borghans, 2014). The ecology of kindergartens and primary schools is very different from non-mainstream homes. Whilst teachers may be frustrated by the lack of parental support for their children's education, immigrant and minority parents may in turn feel helpless in face of what is an alien education system. Teachers may lack awareness of the genuine needs of immigrant and minority parents and how to respond, and tend to employ a deficit perspective with regard to educating immigrant students (Yuen, 2015; Yuen & Grossman, 2009). Teachers in multicultural classrooms can be unaware of their own worldview and stereotyping and their assumptions towards culturally diverse parents, and this can hamper their effectiveness in home–school collaboration.

A further hindrance to teachers offering assistance to immigrant and minority parents is the lack of awareness of the oppression and unfairness that these families are facing. Tsung and Gao (2012) argue that NCS parents are being disadvantaged by their lack of linguistics and cultural capital as valued by the Hong Kong society. Speaking from her personal experience, a Pakistani scholar and parent commented that schools generally fail to address cultural issues in parenting and in the readiness of NCS parents to collaborate with schools (Sharma, 2012). What teachers often disregard is that parents are key partners of teachers, especially in early years' education, and this needs to be reaffirmed. The chair of EOC (2016) ascertains that all ethnic minorities should have equal access to learning opportunities. Schools have a legal obligation to observe the EOC guidance and remove all barriers towards the inclusion of children and parents from diverse cultures. Professional development programmes on intercultural competence are hence advocated to establish an affirming perspective on providing quality educational services for all (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

To examine the exact professional development needs in this area, a needs analysis survey was conducted in 2016. A total of 396 kindergarten teachers were sampled in two groups. The first group consisted of 117 teachers who attended the professional development programmes (PDP) offered the by author's university, a paper questionnaire was administered. The second group consisted of 279 teachers from 20 kindergartens. After obtaining consent from the school principal, the questionnaire was e-mailed to the coordinator of the respective kindergartens. All teachers were invited but their participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and no identifiable personal data were collected. The response rate was high at around 85%. The survey questionnaire items included teachers' self-assessed confidence in educating NCS and CBS; their confidence in employing pedagogical strategies in fostering effective teaching; and working with parents and personnel from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participant teachers also indicated the appropriateness of their initial teacher education.

In addition to the questionnaire survey, three case studies with two kindergartens and one primary school were also conducted to elicit the views and opinions of teachers and parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. Seven focus-group interviews with 28 kindergarten and eight primary school teachers and three individual interviews with principals/senior administrative staff were organized. In addition, four semi-structured focus-group interviews were held with 20 CBS parents in mainland China, and two focus-group interviews were conducted with nine South Asian parents (5 Indians and 4 Filipinos) in a primary school. They all have been living in Hong Kong for 12–18 years. The teacher interviews focused on the following areas: (1) the experiences and views of participant teachers on enhancing learning of immigrant and minority students in classroom teaching; (2) the concerns of most immigrant and minority parents with regard to their children in transition to a new schooling environment; and (3) the response and advice received by parents from participant teachers. During the parent focus-group interviews, attention was concentrated upon: (1) their involvement in their children's educational activities at home and in school; (2) understanding of their children's learning situation; (3) experience in working with the teachers; (4) major worries in their children's transition to primary (grade) one; and (5) major challenges to get involved in their children's learning.

Pedagogical Issues

The survey findings reveal that the majority (90%) of the teacher participants were generally more positive towards and felt competent to supervise CBS, but not NCS. As high as 80% reported that they were either confident or very confident in catering for cultural diversity, and were effective in verbal communication to facilitate good intergroup collaboration between mainstream and non-mainstream students. Some also indicated their confidence in employing intercultural teaching strategies. However, only one out of four teachers reported that they were confident or very confident with regard to home–school collaboration. Whilst most teachers indicated confident or very confident in managing the needs of CBS, the majority (60%) indicated unconfident or very unconfident in handling verbal communication with NCS and collaboration with their parents. Language, therefore, is shown to be a major barrier. Moreover, only half of the teacher participants indicated confident or very confident in catering for cultural diversity and using intercultural teaching strategies in their classrooms. Similarly, close to half of the teacher participants reported unconfident or very unconfident in catering for cultural diversity and in employing intercultural teaching strategies for NCS. With regard to engaging NCS with pro-school behaviours, 40% were unconfident or very unconfident in increasing the attention span, giving homework guidance and tailoring curriculum to enhance the learning effectiveness. Also, 30% of kindergarten teachers were unconfident or very unconfident in handling the NCS with aspects of classroom management, improvement of classroom involvement, homework collection and grading, and promotion of mainstream and non-mainstream collaboration.

The survey findings confirm that educating NCS in mainstream schools is the biggest source of challenge to kindergarten teachers. As NCS are from a different race and culture, the Chinese teachers have to make extra efforts to understand their strengths and needs. Hence, they indicated the least confidence in addressing their learning needs, especially in collaboration with their parents. Without deliberate efforts, teacher effectiveness will decrease significantly in that there is a need for them to provide frequent professional and pedagogical tailoring to cater for diversity. Clearly, as most NCS parents are mostly inactive in school, home–school collaboration is a real challenge that needs to be overcome (Yuen, 2004).

Teachers' Perceived Professional Development Needs

Teachers in a multicultural educational setting often have to face tensions generated between the demands of the classroom and a lack of intercultural competency (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). In Hong Kong, additional funds were made available through school-based support for schools with 10 or more NCS for Chinese learning. A Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme was also launched to equip teachers for teaching Chinese as a second language for NCS. However, schools usually use the grant to outsource the service to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or hire additional teaching assistants to share the workload. It is a fact that teachers seldom work as a professional team to provide adequate and relevant pedagogical support to NCS. In the absence of personal vision and commitment to educating culturally diverse students, learning support easily becomes piecemeal and reduced to paying mere lip service to the requirements. The findings of the survey revealed that around 70% of the 396 respondents rated their teacher education preparation as either inadequate or very inadequate, particularly in terms of equipping them for multicultural teaching and learning. The ratio concerning professional training needs was overwhelming, with 90% indicating it was necessary or very necessary for there to be professional development programmes dealing with intercultural teaching strategies, curriculum adaptation, communicating with multicultural parents, working with multicultural colleagues, and raising the quality of multicultural teaching. Due to the differences in academic readiness among the NCS linked with their cultural and pre-migration factors, teachers indicated that they are not adequately equipped for multicultural education.

Working with Immigrant and Minority Families

A common observation shared by Chinese Hong Kong teachers concerning the role of NCS parents in their children's education was that such parents are over relaxed and show a lack of interest in supporting the learning of their children, especially with regard to homework supervision:

> We [Chinese] have different values on education, and we are more serious about it. But we can see that the NCS parents are rather passive and casual about their children's homework. They simply rely on their relatives or older children to help with homework supervision. (Chinese teacher 1)
>
> I have no idea what their fathers do for a living. They are mostly absent and so are some mothers. If the mothers have children to look after they will rarely attend our parent–teacher association activities. It is difficult to interact with them. (Chinese teacher 2)
>
> These NCS parents often rely on us to teach their kids. They expect us to solve all their kids' homework problems at school so that they do not have to worry about it. They also have low expectation of their children's learning and homework is often left behind. (Chinese teacher 3)

Minority teachers can be instrumental in bridging the gap between minority culture and language and mainstream schooling (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In recent years, kindergartens with high concentrations of South and South East Asian children have recruited a small proportion of teachers and teaching assistants of similar cultural background. But some of them are not so competent in the job. An Indian kindergarten teacher admitted that she and others were not well-equipped to bridge the cultural gap between the mainstream school and the ethnic minority families:

> Because we are hired as teachers, if we want to guide the parents [how to assist their child in their learning] we too need to be equipped. As we are from different cultures and we don't really know the education system in Hong Kong. The school and the government need to give us special training first so that we know how to guide the NCS parents in choosing the right primary schools for their children.

Although hiring diverse staff can build the cultural bridges, this does not necessarily achieve the intended outcomes. The Hong Kong data reveal that the qualifications of the serving Indian, Pakistani and Filipino teachers are mixed and their teaching effectiveness is yet to be proven. These teachers also require professional development and support.

Parents' Perspective on Homework Struggle

Researchers (Kim, 2002; Yuen & Cheung, 2014) acknowledge that Asian parents are very concerned with the academic learning of their children and that at times this leads to tension in the parent–child relationship. By contrast, Hong Kong teachers often view South Asian parents as generally passive and disengaged from their children's learning. However, our interviews with South Asian mothers of primary students provide us with alternative insights into the situation. Homework was a big issue for each of the interviewed parents, especially mathematics and Chinese. Four of the mothers in one group were from the Philippines and there, apparently, they do mathematics quite differently to Hong Kong. Consequently, these mothers found they could not help their children when they had a problem in this subject. It was just too difficult. The Chinese language is also an issue in that none of the mothers could speak Cantonese. They greatly appreciated the extra help their children received for Chinese in Primary (Grade) one, but were deeply worried about what would happen

after this help would end in Primary (Grade) three. During the focus-group interviews, NCS parents offered a range of accounts of their daily struggles with homework supervision with each according to their unique personal and family circumstances.

Another Filipino mother simply admitted that she was overwhelmed by her family responsibilities. She personally had very limited exposure to the community and only connected with co-ethnic friends for urgent matters.

> I can't help my girl to do homework as I know very little of it. Because I am very busy with the children, I just want to stay at home. During the day, I send the primary one, and in the afternoon, the second one. (Filipino mother 5)

Contrary to the general perception of teachers, these parents showed dedication in their homework supervision and in the way they were concerned with their child's education. Each of them said they spent several hours with their child every evening supervising or doing homework. One Filipino mother shared her strategies for organizing her daughter's homework schedule:

> I let my daughter take a rest first after school. Then I would explain to her that she could play with me only if she completed her homework. Otherwise, I would not let her play. In that way, she tended to finish her work faster and we could somehow enjoy a better relationship. (Filipino mother 4)

Chinese Language Is the Most Challenging Subject for NCS Parents

Learning Chinese for NCS in Hong Kong has invited extensive media debate. Most teachers and researchers, however, opine that the lack of clear education policy and teacher professional development is the crux of the problem (Hong Kong Unison, 2012; Shum, Gao, Tsung, & Ki, 2011). Kindergartens with a high proportion of NCS tend to put such students into one class to be taught by teachers of similar ethnic background for easy communication, especially with their parents. Speaking on the challenge of learning Chinese, these NCS teachers made the following observations:

> NCS parents want their kids to know the local language (Chinese) in this day and age for themselves. But if their children are placed in Chinese speaking classes they will have a big problem with homework supervision. I know that some parents have found some people to give assistance to their children to do the Chinese homework in the evening. (Filipino kindergarten teacher 1)

> For the same language reason, the NCS parents are very very worried about the Chinese homework…Also, I don't know why, private Chinese tuition is so expensive and some parents just cannot afford it. (Filipino kindergarten teacher 2)

Language barrier coupled with knowledge deficit in the education system are reasons for immigrant parents being passive in school involvement (Dyson, 2001). Again, knowledge of the mainstream language is the key factor for successful academic and social integration in the society. The interview data show that NCS parents

are actually keen to get involved in their children's school learning especially in finding resources for Chinese learning. But in reality, it is both challenging and costly for them:

> And I want to say more about my fellow mummies. Most of them have difficulties in Chinese. In this school, Primary (grade) one and Primary (grade) two there are tutorial classes after school to help our kids to finish Chinese homework so we are very happy with this, because it's impossible for them to afford private tutorial classes. So the school should focus on the Chinese subject first in the tutorial class. (Filipino mother 1)
>
> After school there's tutorial class for Chinese homework only. So when the children come back home, the other homework is still there. It's not done. Anyway we want our children to do Chinese at school first, because we parents can help them to do mathematics, English and General Studies at home. But Chinese, we cannot read. So I think they should have more Chinese tutorial classes at school. (Filipino mother 2)

Homework for NCS is a real parenting stressor. The time spent supervising homework, of course, is rarely solid, as the children tend to be either tired or wanting a rest or else they want to do something else apart from the homework. Nevertheless, it would appear that homework is the dominant task of the child's evening. One Filipino mother was very strict about this, making her child go to bed at 8 p.m. and rise at 5 a.m. the next morning in order to do an hour's work between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. before they went to school. Such evidence suggests that NCS parents aspire to drive their kids to academic success every bit as much as their mainstream Chinese counterparts, if not more. The findings of parent interviews appear to run counter to the common view that NCS parents are commonly indifferent to their children's learning and/or simply rely on the school to solve their homework problems.

Aspiration and Experience of CBS Parents on Early Years' Education

In contrast to NCS parents, the predominant desire of CBS parents was to have more information and guidance from schools about the Hong Kong education system. As CBS parents generally have good Chinese proficiency and are also fluent in the spoken Cantonese, they are relatively confident in homework supervision. With the view that Hong Kong schooling is perceived as superior to that in mainland China mainly due to the higher English standard in Hong Kong, their focus is more on finding the best education pathway to actualize their children's potential. For this reason, their effort in crossing the boundary for their children's future is considered worthwhile. As some live very close to the immigrant control points, these parents, in fact, offer a very positive picture of the logistical arrangements.

> …my daughter is a Hong Kong resident and sooner or later she has to reintegrate into the society. The HK education standard is higher [than in the mainland]. Moreover, we are geographically very close to Hong Kong and it is affordable for us to make the daily journey to and from the boundary". (A K2 CBS father)

> I have an older boy in a local [Shenzhen] secondary school. From my experience, I can tell the differences between the mainland and Hong Kong curriculum. I find my girl's curriculum is more lively and suitable for her development. Also, it only takes us 30 minutes to cross the boundary. The journey is really do-able. (A K2 CBS mother)

When asked if they are satisfied with the home–school collaboration, a mother made the following remarks:

> We have to rely on a "communication notebook" as we are in the mainland. Each day the class teacher make notes on the book for us to follow up. But the notes can be very selective. For example, one day my girl had a fall and the teacher did not mention it in the book. To them, perhaps it is a small matter and no need to inform us (parents). But we as parents think differently. The teachers should pay more attention to our kids and inform us of their situation regardless whether big or small. I think this is the cultural difference between mainland China and Hong Kong. (A K2 CBS mother)

Due to the geographical and immigration barriers, it has been the general practice of Hong Kong schools to adopt a communication notebook system to connect CBS parents with important school matters, such as collecting their signatures for report cards, homework assignments, behaviour issues, enrolments in events and, etc. Generally, this is a one-way system from teachers to parents.

The Transition from Early Years to Primary Schooling

One of the biggest challenges in early years' education is to secure a place in a primary school. Most kindergarten parents of NCS find it hard to make a decision regarding the right school to send their child. In this regard, home–school–community collaboration, or the lack of it, is a critical factor (Sing Tao Daily, 6 September 2015; Yuen, 2015). Speaking from their experience in choosing the right school, nearly all the NCS parents followed recommendations by their co-ethnic peers. Typically, they were introduced to various schools during the last semester of their child's time at kindergarten. All the children of the parents of one group that was interviewed went to the same kindergarten. Whilst the kindergarten did not recommend their current school over any others, nevertheless a teacher from their current school did come for two 45-minute. Sessions every week to prepare students for Primary (grade) 1, regardless of whether they would choose that particular school or not. The kindergarten also gave out flyers for several different primary schools during this time. The parents in the end chose their school because it has a large percentage (70%) of NCS and so they felt their child would be more at home there and with less discrimination and bullying. One parent was very pleased with her selection and described the school as an international school without the fees. The school had also impressed the parents when they first visited the premises, either during an open day or on another occasion.

As regards to CBS parents, when looking ahead to their children's primary schooling, they were all very anxious. They aspired to place their children in the better primary schools as this would have a direct bearing on their future secondary schooling.

A mother of a K3 student even burst into tears when she spoke of her deep anxiety regarding her boy's future primary schooling in Hong Kong:

> We just wish to give him the best. We have no clue about (Hong Kong) education hence we are uncertain about the teachers' attitude towards him when he proceeds to primary one next year…but the whole school hunt experience has been very stressful to us. (A K3 CBS mother)

For these non-Hong Kong residents, CBS parents felt being excluded by the education system and by mainstream society.

> We received little information from the kindergartens about which primary school is good. So we set up a WeChat group to support one another. We will ask around our mainland friends whose children are now in HK primary schools for recommendations.

When selecting a potential primary school, academic/teaching quality may not be the top concern of the CBS parents and they may not want too much academic pressure on the students. Although parents think highly of the importance of academic performance, they believe their child's travelling time and safety are more important during primary schooling:

> I want to choose a school with high academic ranking, but we have no choice as far as transport arrangements are concerned. We don't want our child to suffer from long-distant school travel each day. For the sake of convenience and safety, our first consideration will be the arrangement of the school bus service. (A K2 CBS mother)

A mother added that early years' education should be for holistic development: "Our expectation focuses on health and happiness of the children. Homework is at the third place. First is health, and second is their psychological needs". (A K2 CBS mother)

Without a clear map of the education system, an informed choice of primary schooling is clearly not an easy one to make, and the deep concern expressed over Primary One School Placement allocation is a real issue.

Conclusion and Implications

Hong Kong data corroborate international studies (McAllister & Irvine, 2000) in determining that there is a remarkable gap between the expectation of teachers and parents with regard to students' learning and family engagement. To a large extent this is due to differences in cultural backgrounds, traditions, languages, values and family structures. As the standard of education is defined by the mainstream culture, when these parents fail to conform or meet the requirements of it, they will easily be judged as indifferent to their children's education by the teachers. It is noteworthy that NCS and CBS parents are somehow being pushed by necessity to have a strong sense of solidarity and self-help to combat their socially disadvantaged situation. The CBS parents especially are connected with each other through their WeChat group for daily communication and mutual support, whilst NCS parents tend to rely more on

their interaction with their co-ethnic community to cater for their children's learning needs. Being of a different race and with limited knowledge of the society, NCS parents feel particularly helpless in mapping their children's abilities with primary placement choice. The CBS parents also reveal difficulties in this area, though for different reasons.

For the NCS students, Chinese literacy training has been rated as a priority for both parents and teachers. This seems to be the most challenging aspect for schools to collaborate meaningfully with ethnic minority families (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2014). Whilst it is hard for Hong Kong Chinese teachers to communicate with NCS parents in a foreign language, many NCS parents are afraid of learning Chinese as this is very different from their mother tongue. Also, there is a lack of family assistance in Chinese learning. However, it is necessary for students to acquire both academic and social Chinese competence in order to be successful at school (Shum et al., 2011). By contrast, learning English is often one reason for CBS parents to justify their efforts in sending the children to Hong Kong schools. In both cases, the dilemma between personal interest and personal needs continues to prevail and there does not appear to be an easy remedy.

It is clear that parent–teacher partnerships are a key element in successfully educating CBS and NCS. Both the NCS and CBS data enfold a very complicated picture of cross-cultural education in early years' education in Hong Kong. Intercultural schooling is a complex process that requires seamless collaboration between the teaching community and student families. On the one hand, parents should be more aware of the implications of being actively involved in their children's education and their own capabilities in addressing problems during the transition period. Making themselves available for building partnerships with schools is crucial and is key to the success of children from diverse cultures (Adams & Shambleau, 2007). On the other, mainstream teachers need to develop sufficient awareness of the inequalities in the education system and the concerted efforts needed to address them. Teachers are change agents within the system and their role in facilitating effective partnerships with parents from diverse cultures is indispensable (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Intercultural teacher development, especially with regard to home–school collaboration, is therefore essential for Hong Kong teachers because their worldview and attitudes towards students from diverse cultures has a direct bearing on their teaching effectiveness.

The final and perhaps the key element in this process is to build a common ground of mutual understanding and trust between school and home so that the two parties can have genuine collaboration on shared educational concerns and issues. In this way, parents can purposefully help their children in aspects that need improvement (like homework supervision) and also collaborate with teachers to effectively foster the necessary adjustments. Parents would be motivated to take part in workshops or activities offered by schools or the community, such as language learning groups, parenting skills, helping with homework and reading for children programs. Through participation, parents will feel safe, confident and motivated to adopt a more positive attitude towards their children's education. On the teacher side, with relevant professional training, teachers can play a key role in the promotion of social equity in early

years. Given the strong evidence suggesting that home–school collaboration is of particular importance to the development of young immigrant and minority children it is critical to take this area forward.

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Chapter 9
Family Acculturation, Parent Style, and Ethnic Minority Students' Identity Construction in Hong Kong

Mingyue Michelle Gu

Abstract This chapter reports on a qualitative study on the interaction between family socialization and parent style of three immigrant South Asian families and how such interaction influences the identity construction of second-generation adolescents in Hong Kong. Taken together, the three families in this study represent the diversified acculturation experiences of the transnational families, with relatively low socioeconomic status, in the host society. The families in this study are found to travel between past, present, and future and are faced with intricate contradiction between ideology and practice. The findings that different transnational families may diversify in their experiences, family language policies, parenting styles, and intergenerational interaction patterns and/or conflicts have implications for policymakers when social policies and professional practices regarding immigrant/transnational families are made.

Keywords Family acculturation · Parent style · Identity construction
Second-generation adolescents · Low socioeconomic status

Introduction

Acculturation refers to the degree to which immigrants or other non-dominant groups are willing to have contact with or avoid those outside their group, and the degree to which they are willing to maintain or surrender their cultural attributes (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Intergenerational influences on immigrant adolescents' acculturation are most likely to take place in the family, their first locus of socialization. An immigrant family, as a complex social system, allows space for the acculturation orientations of each family member to interact and may influence the family's adaptation as a whole (Vatz Laaroussi, 2001). Family socialization includes family ethnic enculturation and family host cultural enculturation. While the former refers to the

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extent to which families feel the need to integrate their children within the ethnic culture and ethnic social network—and exchanges with children on topics related to country of origin and ethnic culture, the latter means the extent to which parents feel it necessary to integrate their children into the host society, the extent to which parents identify with the emotional and relational style of the host society, and intra-familial exchanges on topics related to host culture, host society, immigration, and racism (Sabatier, 2008). An immigrant family, as a complex social system, allows space for the acculturation orientations of each family member to interact and may influence the family's adaptation as a whole (Vatz Laaroussi, 2001).

It has been found that parent enculturation attitudes and parent style are both found to contribute to the identity construction and acculturation of immigrant students (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Schönpflug, 2001). Nonetheless, family host culture enculturation has not been sufficiently addressed and is seen, in most cases, as a secondary factor in explaining ethnic identity (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Romero, Cuéllar, & Roberts, 2000; Rosenthal & Cichello, 1986). One exception is a recent study, conducted by Sabatier (2008), which indicated that family host culture enculturation contributes positively to children's ethnic and host cultural identity formation. According to Danielewicz (2001, p. 10), identity refers to "our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are." Weedon (1997, p. 112) further suggests that identity construction "occurs through the identification by the individual with particular subject positions within discourses." This study aims to provide more empirical support for the role host cultural enculturation plays in the adolescent acculturation process. Specifically, the following question will be addressed:

> How does family socialization interact with parenting style to influence the identity construction of second-generation adolescents in Hong Kong?

Acculturation, Parent Style Well-Being, and Identity Construction of the Second Generation

An immigrant family, as a complex social system, allows space for the acculturation orientations of each family member to interact and may influence the family's adaptation as a whole (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Vatz Laaroussi, 2001). Acculturation processes experienced by generations may influence family relationships. Literature suggests that parents and children have been found to adapt to the host culture at different paces, which results in acculturation gaps between two generations (Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009), parent–child relationships (Driscoll, Russell, & Crockett, 2008; Kwak, 2003) and adolescent well-being (Wolfradt, Hemple, & Miles, 2003). Acculturation enables us to better disentangle the problems facing parent–child relations in immigrant families and to better explain the intergenerational tensions (Kuczynski, Navara, & Boiger, 2011).

Socialization and enculturation enable the transmission of values and beliefs between generations (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002). While enculturation

is a process whereby individuals learn social values, norms, customs, and practices of a culture through engaging in the everyday activities of residing in a particular culture and through being embedded in a certain culture, socialization takes places in a more intentional manner, where cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors are communicated through modeling, instruction, and other parenting strategies such as managing children's environment (Parke et al., 2003).

Family acculturation is a natural field where enculturation and socialization take place in an intertwined way. For families living in their own cultural context, the transmission of parent values is, to a large extent, supported by group processes, such as everyday interactions with community members who share similar values and practices. Parents and children of immigrant families may need to adjust the values and practices of their generation and culture and may encounter the contradiction between the parents' values as well as practices and those of children. The transmission of heritage culture from the first to the second generation primarily depends on parents' efforts and strategies.

Parent style refers to "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that creates an emotional climate in which child-rearing behaviours are expressed" (Sabatier & Berry, 2008, p. 164). Immigrant parents' acculturation strategies may influence their parenting beliefs and practices, especially the degree to which their parenting practices are culturally specific (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Costigan & Su, 2008). Culturally significant parenting beliefs tend to resist change (Ngo & Malz, 1998). For instance, in a study conducted among immigrant Chinese parents in the UK, the findings suggested that Chinese immigrant parents retain strong Chinese identity and exert effort in teaching their children about their heritage, and that the stronger the parents' affiliation with Chinese culture, the more Chinese-specific parenting they showed (Huang & Lamb, 2015). Similarly, Wang and Phinney (1998) found that immigrant Chinese mothers tended to be more authoritarian and were more likely to demand maturity and independence from their children than are Anglo-American mothers.

The literature (e.g., Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009; Costigan & Su, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Guo, 2012) also suggested that parenting practices and styles may gradually evolve with each successive generation in the receiving context in the course of acculturation, "in response to increasing distance from the culture of origin and the need to adjust to the society in which parents are raising their children" (Driscoll et al., 2008, p. 191). The longer the immigrant mothers live in the receiving context, the more they identified with the host culture. For example, much of the research indicated that immigrant parents' acculturation to mainstream parenting styles may lead to deteriorating protective family values and behaviors (Denner, Kirby, Coyle, & Brindis, 2001; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999).

Parenting practices are also shaped by families' economic and social situations. For example, while Anglo-American parents tend to view institutions in society, as reinforcing their own values, immigrant Latino parents are more likely to see institutions as counteracting their values (Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Varela et al., 2004). Moreover, compared with the white parents, the immigrant Latino parents are more likely to live in dangerous neighborhood and face discrimination, and

thus they may exercise more control over their children's choices and behaviors so as to shield them from external perils (Varela et al., 2004).

A growing body of the literature has depicted the parent style of immigrant families as contributing to the identity construction and acculturation of immigrant students (Gu & Cheung, 2016; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Sabatier, 2008; Schönpflug, 2001). Parent styles are often examined for their direct and indirect effects on adolescent psychological and social characteristics, such as academic performance, self-worth, and deviance. These effects have been found to be contextually related and to vary across cultural groups (Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996; Sabatier & Berry, 2008).

It has been found that adolescents' perceived relationship with their parents, parents enculturation attitudes and parents' academic attitudes contribute to the identity formation and acculturation of second-generation immigrants (Sabatier, 2008). Specifically, two aspects of adolescents perceived relationship with parents—their attachment to their parents' culture and their self-disclosure to their parents—were found to contribute to their identity construction (Sabatier, 2008). Attachment to parent culture refers to the affective link adolescents forge with their parents' cultural roots and lifestyles during their childhood and has been found to reinforce their sense of belonging to their parents' ethnic group and to predict their ethnic identity (Sabatier, 2008). Adolescents' self-disclosure to their parents refers to "the way adolescents voice their concerns and report their daily activities to parents" (Sabatier, 2008, p. 189) and to its relationship with mutual trust and the familial emotional climate (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999).

Methods

Research Context

The ethnic minority population who are permanent residents in Hong Kong has increased by 31.2% in the past decade, and now constitutes 6.4% of the total population (Census & Statistics Department, 2012). Of this subpopulation, 81% are non-Chinese Asians, including Indonesians (29.6%), Filipinos (29.5%), Indians (6%), Pakistanis (4%), Nepalese (3.7%), Japanese (2.8%), Thais (2.5%), Koreans (1.2%), and other Asians (1.6%). Many South Asians are stereotyped in the media as welfare abusers and as "a potential threat to the population mix," due to their growing population, which is increasing at the rate of 10,000 (14%) per year (Shum, Gao, & Tsung, 2012, p. 252).

In 2011, school attendance rates among ethnic aged 3–5 and 17–18 were 86.9 and 75.7%, compared to 91.3 and 86.0%, for the population as a whole. For the 19–24 age group, the 2011 school attendance rate for ethnic minorities was 13.8%, compared to 43.8% for the population as a whole (Census & Statistics Department, 2012). A survey by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2012 showed that students from

South Asia accounted for 3.2% of primary school pupils, but only 1.1% of senior secondary students, and 0.59% of tertiary students (Niroula, 2014).

Although schooling is the only avenue for their upward mobility, South Asian students have faced difficulties in their schooling, because they tend to receive less family support from their parents (who may not have enough knowledge of Cantonese and English to be of assistance) may not have social networks capable of relaying information about the education system and have less knowledge about local culture than local students (Gu, 2015; Gu & Patkin, 2013).

Participants and Data Collection

A case study approach was adopted for this study. A case study approach promotes close collaboration between researchers and participants, enabling the participants to describe their views of reality more fully, and the researchers to better understand participants' experiences and views (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Robottom & Hart, 1993). It also facilitates investigating contextual influences on the phenomenon under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study approach adopted in this study helped the researcher explore the impacts of family acculturation and parenting style on the identity construction of second-generation immigrant adolescents and to consider the cases in relation to their specific family contexts and personal backgrounds. A strategic approach to sampling was adopted to include three dyads (one parent and one child) with different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, respectively, from Pakistan, India, and Nepal. While both Pakistani and Indian dyads are a mother and a daughter, the Nepalese dyad is a father and a daughter. All the participants and their families are permanent residents in Hong Kong. A teacher who teaches South Asian students in a local secondary school introduced the students and their parents to the researcher. All the names are pseudonyms. Two semi-structured interviews were respectively conducted with the parent and the child over a period of half a year. The interviews lasted for 60 min or so, took place in cafes, and were audio-taped. The interviews were conducted in English and were later transcribed by the researcher. In this study, interviews are seen as reflecting the co-constructions of interviewer and interviewee (Freeman, 1996) and as a site where speakers can do discursive work to coherently construct identity (Fairclough, 2003). The data analysis involved a gradually evolving process in which the dataset, previous literature, and research question were constantly evaluated, re-evaluated, and reformulated. The data were reviewed repeatedly until themes and patterns that potentially answered the research questions emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The preliminary findings were confirmed and clarified with the participants. Alternative explanations were searched to test the emerging understandings across cases. The similarities and differences across three families were identified and analyzed. It is noteworthy that this study does not aim to produce generalizable data; rather, it offers a rich, nuanced understanding of the lives of three immigrant families in a host society.

Findings

A Pakistani Family

The first dyad whose experiences I want to explore is a first-generation Pakistani mother who has lived in Hong Kong for 18 years and her second daughter. Her three children—two daughters and one son—were all attending secondary schools when the study was conducted. I interviewed the mother (Tarun) and her second daughter (Anara), who was 13 years old separately. Each of them was interviewed twice. Tarun was born and received secondary education in Pakistan and was a full-time homemaker. Her husband, who was "a typical Pakistani" in her words, worked as a construction worker in a local company in Hong Kong. She could not speak much Cantonese, but could speak English quite well, and could read and write in English. She learnt English at school and through watching TV programmes, talking to friends, and reading newspapers and magazines in English. Tarun tended to adopt a monolingual family policy for her children's heritage language maintenance. She shared her family language policy with me:

Researcher: Can you speak your home language?
Tarun: Yes, we do.
Researcher: What kind of language?
Tarun: Urdu and Punjabi. With the children we can speak Urdu language—the national language. But me and my husband communicate in our dialect—Punjabi.
Researcher: Why?
Tarun: Punjabi is more widely used in Pakistan and I hope my children can speak and use it. We are not Chinese and even though we get the permanent ID card, we are never regarded as Chinese. We cannot lose our own identity. For my husband and me, Urdu is a more familiar language and it is like we are not in Hong Kong, but in my hometown.
Researcher: Do you use English?
Tarun: No, I tried to forbid my children to use English at home but sometimes they code-switch among themselves. But at least they use Urdu with me.

For Tarun, Punjabi and Urdu had different symbolic meanings—while speaking Urdu may invoke nostalgia among Tarun and her husband, Punjabi was used to (hopefully) establish their children's Pakistani national identity. From her statement, "we are not Chinese and even though we get the permanent ID card, we are never regarded as Chinese," we may find that Tarun neither self-positioned her family as Chinese, nor thought they were positioned as a part of the mainstream community; hence, heritage languages were pivotal to their keeping their "own identity." Tarun's attempt to maintain her heritage language could also be understood as a contestation of her marginalized position in the host society. Probably due to this reason, she

pushed her children to use Punjabi only at home and discouraged (but could not prohibit) code-switching.

When asked about parenting styles, Tarun differentiated herself from the Pakistani parents in her hometown, by delineating the differences between her children and those back home:

Tarun: There is a lot of difference between Pakistani students living there and here. First of all, the living style is changed. Secondly, the behaviors of the kids here and there are different. Because in there it's really strict, so the children are not really okay to communicate with the parents freely. But here the parents are so open, so they make up a kind of relationship between them. They manage a good relationship. Whenever she's facing any problems, she can just talk to her parents.

Researcher: What kind of parenting style do you think is better?

Tarun: Okay. Do not be too strict, and do not be too free. That's what they are saying. Because if you're too open, then they will be scared after they have done something wrong. And if you're too strict, they won't be able to communicate with you and share their feelings with you when they're facing problems. I think you have to make a balance. Not too free, not too strict. Support them into the things, which you think are good for them. Try to stop them from the things, which you think can harm them in the future, and which will not let them go into the right path.

Tarun advocated a balanced parenting style and believed this was the most effective way to establish a communicative relationship with her children and to ensure they stayed on "the right path." Here Tarun set up differences between her parenting style and that of parents in Pakistan, as well as between her own children and children in her hometown. Tarun further distinguished herself from the Pakistani community in Hong Kong:

Tarun: We can see there are a lot of people from our country. We have relatives, like uncles, aunts, neighbors in Pakistan. We see that some of them are really strict with their children, so mostly the girls and daughters do not share their feelings with their parents, not even their moms. When they have something to tell, the mothers start to shout. Not shout, but try to get angry. I think they should understand that their living style and childhood are so much different than the kids at the moment. They need to change these things, I guess.

A transformative discourse emerges in the above extract. Tarun realized that parenting style should be adjusted and developed with the changing environment, and, since their children have grown up in the host society, parents should fully understand their living style and learning environment.

However, a detailed analysis of the data showed contradictions between ideology and practices. On the one hand, the Pakistani mother advocated a more "localized" way of parenting, by encouraging more sharing on the part of the children, and by providing them with support and advice. On the other hand, she indicated a negative view toward the children's acculturation with the local community. Her resistance to the local culture in practice can be seen in the following extract, in which she talks about whether parents should encourage their children to develop ties with the local society outside of school:

Tarun: At one point of view, I think yes. But in other point, I do not really support this.
Researcher: Why?
Tarun: Because as we are Muslims, we really follow our religion, so we do not really want to get into other people. Then she will try to follow their culture, because this is what happens when she will make some other friends, like Christian or some others. Sometimes when she's going to hang out with them, she will try to dress up like them or maybe eat something, which is not really meant for us to eat. So we do not really want these things to happen in the future. That's why we have put into their minds that stay in your own community.

Tarun believed that mingling with friends from other religious or cultural community may change her children in terms of dressing and behaving in a negative way and saw it as the parents' responsibility to prevent the children from being influenced by the other cultures. As she said,

Tarun: She did have Chinese, Filipino, and Nepalese friends, but when going out, hanging around, and something outside of school, we do not really allow her to go out with this kind of community. Instead, if it's related to schoolwork or something important, then it's fine. If it's just normally hanging out, we won't really say "just go out with them."
Researcher: So do you think she can understand?
Tarun: Yes, she does. In her first year, she made lots of friends. But she remembers what we have taught her as well, and she basically stays with the Pakistani group of friends.

It seems that, since the family socialization policy was to remain within the Pakistani community, Tarun's daughter mainly communicated with friends of the same ethnicity and religion. While it is of paramount importance to maintain one's heritage culture and language in the host society, more communication with the rest of society would benefit both the ethnic minority group and the local group, in terms of translating that heritage into resources. A more receptive society would foster greater communication and trust.

Tarun's daughter, Anara, voiced little disagreement with her mother's control of her social communications; in fact, her mother's parenting style strongly resonated with her:

Anara: Chinese have traditions, and we also have traditions. Indians also have. Actually we have to follow it, or we are not Pakistanis. We have to follow it to prove that we are Pakistanis and Muslims. So our parents should teach us the traditions. My mom does teach me the traditions. The costumes are what we are wearing.
Researcher: Do you think children can argue with parents?
Anara: No, never. How can I? Because she is my mom. Pakistani girls are good.

Echoing her mother's view, Anara saw learning her traditions and cultures as essential to distinguish her family and ethnic group from other ethnic groups and to maintain their heritage and religious identity. Filial piety and obedience to parents are regarded as important criteria for becoming a good Pakistani girl.

An Indian Family

The second participant was an Indian lady (Tena) who was born in Hong Kong, but who returned to India for her primary and secondary education. While her husband worked in an airport restaurant, she ran her own boutique shop selling traditional clothing, mainly to ethnic minority customers. Her husband held a Master's degree, and she completed her secondary education in India. She had two daughters, who were both pursuing associate degrees[1] in a community college in Hong Kong, and one 17-year-old son, Anish, who was in the second year of high school. I conducted two individual interviews with each of Tena and Anish. Tena spoke fluent English and Hindi, but had little Cantonese. Hindi was the usual family language. Tena held a flexible view on her children's language practice at home:

Researcher: How about the siblings? What languages do they use?
Tena: Chinese, English, Hindi, Urdu. They are okay with all these four languages. Depends on their mood. When they're angry, they will say something in Chinese. When they're happy or try to show off something, they will speak English. With parents, mostly they use Hindi and Urdu. So mostly siblings are talking in Chinese and English.
Researcher: Oh, this is very interesting. They use languages very flexibly.
Tena: Yeah, we never restrict them or give them strict rules about what language they should use.

Tena was aware of the different symbolic meanings of different languages to children. Her flexible ideology on language use at home helped create a context for

[1] An associate degree is an *undergraduate academic degree* awarded by colleges and universities upon completion of a course of study lasting two years. Students who do not do well enough for university entrance examination in Hong Kong enroll in associate degree courses with the hope to obtain a place for government-funded bachelor's degree courses.

her children's multilingual practices. Tena went on to rank the importance of different languages:

Researcher: Among your own mother languages, Cantonese and English, do you think which language is the most important to your children's future?
Tena: English, because it means more future in Hong Kong and even outside Hong Kong.
Researcher: How about the second important language?
Tena: Mother tongue. To communicate with our own community and to keep the traditions and customs.
Researcher: Why Chinese has been put in the third place?
Tena: Because… Firstly, it's very difficult. Secondly, if they want to live in Hong Kong, then it's okay. But if they want to live outside Hong Kong, then you can say it's useless.

Tena saw English as the most important language, due to its global status, and thought her heritage language was essential to linking her children to the heritage community and to maintaining its cultures and values. Cantonese was ranked least important, because of its difficulty level and regional use. However, some contradictions between her language ideology and practices occurred when Tena further elaborated on her understanding of the role of Cantonese in her children's future life:

Researcher: Do you have any plan for your children's future? You want them to live in Hong Kong?
Tena: Yeah, live in Hong Kong. Even for most of the Chinese, if their children study in the international school, they do not know reading and writing Chinese. It's very hard. I do not know the Chinese, but the children said the Chinese language is very difficult. No alphabet.
Researcher: It's logographic.
Tena: Yeah, very difficult.
…
Tena: Yes. Even I know, if they learn the Chinese, they have a much better future.
Researcher: Did you push them to learn?
Tena: Yes, I asked them to watch the TV. Even my husband asks them to watch the TV in Chinese and asks them to speak Chinese at home.

Even though Tena thought Cantonese was a regional language and deemed it the least important language for her children, she saw Hong Kong as the place in which her children would study and live in the future. She acknowledged that knowledge of Chinese would enable her children to have a much better future in Hong Kong, in terms of educational and career opportunities. It was noticeable that Tena mentioned twice how difficult it was to learn Chinese (spoken Cantonese and written Chinese). She referred to it as a logographic language so hard to learn, that even some Chinese students in international schools were unable to become fully competent. This could be understood as a legitimate strategy by which Tena justified her children's low

proficiency level in Chinese. The two ways for her children to practice Cantonese at home were watching TV programmes and practicing among themselves. Tena's son, Anish, said his parents encouraged their children to communicate with locals:

Anish: My parents ask me to walk outside, make some local friends, learn some Chinese.
Researcher: To learn some Chinese? And then?
Anish: Communicate better, more convenient
Researcher: Do you have local friends?
Anish: Not really, only sometimes play basketball with some local friends, but not regularly and stably. My good friends are from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
Researcher: Why?
Anish: We do not have so many topics in common and they didn't like to speak Cantonese with me. Many times when I spoke Cantonese, they looked confused.

Even though the parents were sufficiently open-minded to encourage Anish to interact with local peers outside of their ethnic community, it seems Anish faced both cultural and linguistic obstacles to setting up a multiethnic social network, and all his good friends were from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Tena's family regularly attended gatherings of an Indian community in Hong Kong that included hundreds of people. Tena said people at such gatherings communicated mainly in Hindi, Urdu, or Punjabi among themselves, with occasional words or phrases in English. When asked the importance of maintaining her heritage language and culture, Tena said,

Tena: If you asked me the question, am I an Indian or a Hong Kong person. I will say I am an Indian.
Researcher: do not you think you are a Hong Kong person as well?
Tena: I can, but the Chinese people do not accept… Even you can say the British nationality. Before, if I was born in Hong Kong, after 1997 I got the British citizenship. But I cannot say I am a British either. Not only the adults, I hope my children can remember where they are from. We can find more resonance in our community.

The above excerpt revealed that even if Tena would like to identify herself as a Chinese citizen, the local people did not see her as a member of them. Being excluded from the mainstream community strengthened the sense of belonging of Tena and her family to the heritage community. They saw maintaining the heritage culture and identity as critical for a legitimate position in the heritage community.

Tena and her husband made efforts to help their children develop connection with the host society, according to her son, Anish:

Anish: My parents introduced the old airport, how Hong Kong used to be, the improvement, the change, since they were here, and the change of people's attitudes.

Researcher: How were people's attitudes like before?
Anish: Now better
Researcher: Do they tell you how hard they make a living here before?
Anish: Yeah
Researcher: How about today? Do your parents make you learn more about Hong Kong? Like how to find a job, how to go to universities, something like this
Anish: Maybe they are not familiar with these things, but they gather as much as they can; they tell me about it.

Anish was also found to actively facilitate family acculturation within the local context. Born in Hong Kong, he played a more "native" role by introducing local food, entertainment, restaurants, and places to his parents. However, intergenerational incongruences were found among Anish and his parents. He said when asked about the major difference between him and his parents:

Researcher: What is the major difference between you and your parents?
Anish: There are many things we do not agree on… Maybe because they learn different things, I learn different things, school environment is different, and so they still think somehow like their school. They do not know much about my school and my life
…
Anish: For example, let's say, my father went to pray, right, they want me to pray five time every day also, but I can't do that
Researcher: Why?
Anish: It all depends on me, it should be, because you do not want to pray, no one can force you, you can pray by yourself. They asked me to wear traditional clothes during festivals but I want to dress normally like a local. My mum wears salwar everyday.
Researcher: Yes, I understand, so they hope that you can be more religious
Anish: Yes, but not many people follow, the younger generation never follow
Researcher: Why not?
Anish: Because they have more exposure to western culture and all that stuff, and school everything, everyone is different there. I think we need to think about the future and do something more suitable

While the parents wanted to instill in him more knowledge about their history, religious beliefs, culture, and traditions, Anish was more forward-looking and concerned with his future. Despite his parents' good intention, Anish thought they had insufficient up-to-date knowledge about the current host society and so could not provide practical advice to him. Anish was living in a "different" world from that his parents had inhabited when they were young. Dilemmas could be found in the parents' practices. For example, while they realized the importance of socialization into the host society and of learning Cantonese, they could not provide pragmatic support to their children's efforts to do so; while they understood the necessity of maintaining their heritage culture and religion, and urged the children to follow suit,

the children, who had internalized "new" ideas from the outer world, argued for individuality at home and wanted more autonomy. Anish's lack of recognition of his heritage culture and tradition can be seen in his use of the term "normal" when talking about how locals dressed; he wanted to dress like a local and resisted wearing traditional clothes.

A Nepalese Family

The third family I considered was a Nepalese father, Gyan, who had been living in Hong Kong for 19 years when the study started. Gyan worked in a hotel, while his wife was a full-time homemaker who used to work in a local restaurant. They had one daughter and one son. I conducted individual interviews with Gyan and his 13-year-old daughter Deeksha separately. Each of them was interviewed twice. Gyan said he could hardly speak Cantonese because English was the most used language; however, his wife and two children could speak some, as they had had more exposure.

When asked about his attitudes toward languages, Gyan placed great importance on Chinese (spoken Cantonese and written Chinese), but saw little practical value in his heritage language, which he regarded as only a home language:

Researcher: Did you teach your children how to read and write the home language?
Gyan: I tried before. But they didn't like to read. It's not necessary also, because they never go back there. They are still here, so I must give them more time on Chinese. Actually heritage language is not necessary. Only at home.
Researcher: Can your kids read and write?
Gyan: No, they never read and write. Only can speak some.
Researcher: Between Chinese and English, do you think which one is more important?
Gyan: Actually English is worldwide. Everybody speaks it. English is better than Chinese. But if you want to stay here, for the new generation, you must study Chinese. If you walk into an office or anywhere, they all use Chinese. A little bit more English. But Chinese is everywhere. I always push them to learn Chinese and told them that home language is only used at home. But my two kids used more English and Cantonese at school. Before, I studied Cantonese in a community school. I tried for almost two and a half years. I also learnt some Mandarin. China is a rising market. Knowing Mandarin means more opportunities in the future.

Gyan attached little importance to his heritage language and encouraged his children to spend more time learning Chinese. Even at home, English and Cantonese were used more often than their heritage language among the children. Gyan tried to adapt his family to the host context by learning Cantonese and Mandarin and by

socializing with the local community. For this family, perhaps, Mandarin was seen as a way to link to imagined new work opportunities in a potential China-related business market. Different from the previous two participants, Gyan showed a clear tendency to encourage his children's detachment from their heritage language.

Gyan's language ideology was reflected in the family's acculturation practices. He said his children had ever been back to Nepal since they were born and not only for financial reasons; rather, Gyan said he wanted to make them "more Chinese and local."

Researcher: Do you have a Nepalese community?
Gyan: Actually I am not into that thing right now, because I do not have time also. We have more local friends. While we are together, it's always good. It's okay. I want my children to adjust themselves in where we are now.

Gyan's concern that more contact with their heritage community would limit his children's socialization within the mainstream community seemed to place a separation between the heritage culture and the host culture.

In spite of his desire to be fully integrated into the mainstream culture and community, contradictions existed in Gyan's parenting style, as can be seen in the following excerpts from Gyan and Deeksha:

Deeksha: My parents do not allow me to go out freely. Sometimes I will go outside, for study or something if necessary, no problem. They let me go. Library, I can go. But other places, I can't.
Interviewer: Are they strict with your brother?
Deeksha: No, son and daughter are the same.
Interviewer: Why they are so strict?
Deeksha: Because we want me to behave well. They said there are lots of deficits in the society.
Interviewer: A lot of deficits. For example?
Deeksha: My father said, "in the street, they smoke something, we do not know." That's why they do not like us to come out.

Interviewer: Do you think your daughter is different from the people in your hometown?
Gyan: Actually they are similar, not different, only speak different. That's it.
Interviewer: Would you please describe the difference between a typical Nepalese girl and the local Hong Kong girl?
Gyan: They are good. They are more polite and respect parents and the elderly more than the local children.
Interviewer: Okay.

Gyan's actual strong identification with his heritage culture can be seen in his parenting style and his negative views toward some behaviors among the local youth. Neither his daughter nor his son were allowed to go out freely, except for study purposes, for fear of being influenced by the local youth. Gyan aimed to educate his

daughter to be exactly the same as the Nepalese girls back in his hometown and saw Nepalese girls as better behaved than local girls.

Discussion and Conclusion

An immigrant family, as a complex social system, allows space for the acculturation orientations of each family member to interact and may influence the family's adaptation as a whole (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Vatz Laaroussi, 2001). Acculturation processes experienced by generations may influence family relationships. Literature suggests that parents and children have been found to adapt to the host culture at different paces, which results in acculturation gaps between two generations (Kim et al., 2009), parent–child relationships (Driscoll et al., 2008; Kwak, 2003), and adolescent well-being (Wolfradt et al., 2003). Acculturation enables us to better disentangle the problems facing parent–child relations in immigrant families and to better explain the intergenerational tensions (Kuczynski et al., 2011).

Consistent with the previous findings (e.g., Kuczynski et al., 2011; Vatz Laaroussi, 2001), immigrant families in this study were found to be sites of struggle for negotiating values, language practices, and parent–child relationships. While all three immigrant families encountered linguistic and sociocultural difficulties in the socialization process, their acculturation strategies and language ideology appeared different. For the Pakistani family, maintaining their heritage language, ethnic culture, and religious identity took priority. Multilingual practice was prohibited in Tarun's family, and Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, was the "official" language used between parents and children. It might be argued that monolingual practice is not beneficial for children's multilingual competence, but if we consider the broader learning and social environment, the advantage of keeping a heritage language environment at home could be acknowledged. There are only a limited number of schools in Hong Kong where south Asian students can study their heritage language(s) as a second language, and there are no such complementary schools available to the family. Scholars have expressed the concern that south Asian children in Hong Kong may become a group without a real first language, in that they are not literately competent enough in either English, Chinese, or their heritage language (Gu, Kou, & Guo, 2017). The effort to maintain their heritage language at home went hand in hand with their acculturation strategy in the host society; i.e., they regularly attended activities within the Pakistani community and barely had any local friends or contacts. It is easy to suggest that the Pakistani family leave its comfort zone and socialize with the mainstream community; however, as a minority group with relatively low socioeconomic status in the surrounding Chinese society, members of the Pakistani community will still encounter difficulties, even if they proactively merge into the host society.

The Indian family adopted a bi-acculturation strategy. Their desire to keep their heritage identity and achieve a legitimate place in the host society went hand in hand with their family language policy. The children could use languages flexi-

bly, which the parents saw as an indicator of multilingual competence. The lack of external support they experienced for learning the local language can be seen in the two major approaches the parents adopted to facilitate their children's Cantonese learning—i.e., watching TV and practicing among themselves. By aligning themselves with the heritage community in Hong Kong, the Indian family was searching for a sense of contentment, security, and identification. This raises the interesting and complex interplay between language, identity, and migration. Enculturation and socialization, taking place in an intertwined way, are processes of transmitting values and beliefs between generations (Berry et al., 2002). Intergenerational tensions regarding ideological conflict emerged in this family. We may argue that the boy's "rebellion" in terms of cultural and religious practice could be understood as his agentive role in acculturating the family into the host society by bringing in new ideas and values from a world with which he was more familiar than his parents.

The Nepalese family stood in stark contrast to the family language ideology and acculturation practices of the Pakistani family, in that the Nepalese family, having a strong desire to acculturate into the mainstream society, chose to be alienated from their heritage culture and community, and interacted with local friends only. While for the Nepalese father, Cantonese and Mandarin represented where they now lived, and where they would be in the future, their heritage language, Nepalese, was seen as a home language and as having no direct impact on their life in the host context. Nonetheless, their communications with locals seemed to stay at the family level, and the children were under strict supervision in terms of their social contacts, as their parents feared their children would lose the characteristics of Nepalese youth and be negatively influenced by the local youth. The parents' ambivalent attitudes toward the host community tended to place the children in a marginalized position, in relation to both the heritage and host cultures. Furthermore, while we need to avoid applying homogeneous labels to ethnic minority groups, it would be desirable if the immigrant families recognize the heterogeneity of the local youth.

Taken together, the three families in this study represent the diversified acculturation experiences of transnational families with relatively low socioeconomic status, in the host society. Their experiences reveal that, in spite of the proactive efforts ethnic minority parents and children made to establish social ties with the local society, they did not have enough social support for Chinese learning and acculturation into the mainstream society. This points to the necessity of providing additional government support. For example, it would be desirable if more training programs that familiarize the ethnic minority parents with the local cultures and customs and facilitate their Chinese and/or English learning could be offered. Furthermore, activities, such as experience sharing on kids' education, involving both Chinese and ethnic minority parents, could be organized to break down stereotypes and to promote friendship and rapport among different ethnic groups.

Echoing the findings of previous studies on transnational families in other contexts (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen, 2015; Guo, 2006; Zhu & Li, 2016), the families in this study were found to travel between the past, present, and future and faced with intricate contradictions between their language ideologies and practices. The Pakistani family emphasized where they came from (i.e., Pakistan), rather than where

they are (i.e., Hong Kong); however, no family unit can be entirely aloof from its outer surroundings. While the Pakistani mother adopted a more localized parenting style to foster more communication between parents and children, she resisted establishing social ties with the local community. The Indian family attempted to link where they were from and where they are now and to manage the conflict between their heritage values and the kid's "newly acquired" values, such as arguing for less parents' control and more individual autonomy, especially when dealing with the parent–children relationship. The Nepalese family decided to be forward-looking and viewed getting rid of the past as an effective way of adjusting to the host context and of connecting themselves to an imagined, prosperous future. Nonetheless, the Nepalese family did not fully identify with the values of the host society, especially the behavior patterns of the local youth.

Both the Indian parents and the Nepalese parents endeavored to acculturate their children within the host society. However, the findings indicate that they may have failed to keep up with the changes in the host culture and failed to have provided appropriate support to their children due to their own relatively limited knowledge of the host society, their contradictory feelings toward mainstream cultures and values, and their ambivalence toward identity issues. While they recognized the importance of acculturation into the mainstream culture, they differentiated the children from the local youth and set up a stark opposition between heritage and mainstream cultures. Furthermore, the findings indicate that, besides the length of stay (Denner et al., 2001), other factors such as willingness to maintain engagement with the heritage community as well as to establish social ties with the host community, the exposure to different values, and self-positioning between the heritage and the mainstream, played roles in acculturation and parental styles. This revealed the necessity of ethnic families to move beyond an essentialized view on the heritage and mainstream cultures. A more open attitude toward diversity would enable a transition from an "either-or" position to a transnational identity.

Exploring how identities and parenting styles are experientially, historically, and socially constructed is of importance for achieving a deepened understanding of migrant families worldwide (e.g., Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Zhu & Li, 2016). The findings that different transnational families may be diverse in their experiences, family language policies, parenting styles, and intergenerational interaction patterns and/or conflicts, have implications for policymakers, when social policies and professional practices regarding immigrant/transnational families are being made. For example, it is important to avoid seeing transnational families as a homogeneous, uniform group, and to provide them with appropriate and more effective support and assistance. It would be desirable to offer them opportunities to introduce their own cultures as well as know-hows such as tailoring and cooking to the local community, in order to enhance multicultural awareness and mutual understanding. The findings also suggested that schools and teachers should give more attention to hidden but powerful forms of parental involvement that transcend the parent–school relationships, and through which they influence children's acculturation, heritage language maintenance, and second language(s) learning (Guo, 2006). Therefore, enhanced interaction between teachers and parents from different cultural, ethnic, religious,

and language backgrounds would be beneficial to both parties to move beyond narrowly defined standards and to establish values that validate diversity.

This study is focused on three families only. Families with different migration experiences, educational backgrounds, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and socioeconomic status may practice different acculturation styles in the host society. This would be a direction for future research. Furthermore, further research could be conducted on a longitudinal basis to explore how the children's identities are constructed across the local, national, transnational, and global scales, in their future mobility trajectories (c.f., Zhang & Guo, 2015).

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Chapter 10
Parent–School Partnerships in Education: New Development of the School Council in South Korea

Anna Kim

Abstract Parent–school partnership is a relatively recent event in South Korea. This new pattern of partnership should be understood in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical context of the educational reform of South Korea because it came from the whole idea of educational reform of administration and management system toward more decentralized school-based management. There are mixed evaluations about how much the school council contributes to autonomous school-based management system by promoting parent and community participation. But, it is fair to say that there is a tendency that partnership between family and school through school councils has strengthened although there are still many issues awaiting to be solved at the same time. This chapter presents the background, roles, and characteristics of the school council and examines its possibilities and limits in parent–school partnership development.

Keywords Parent–school partnership · School council · School-based management · Educational reform · South Korea

Introduction

Korean people's high respect for education and the strong family structure have been the driving force behind the country's rapid development. Since Korea launched an economic development program in the 1960s, education has played a major role in laying the foundation upon which democratic principles and institutions are based. It has promoted political knowledge, changed political behavior patterns, and shaped

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political attitudes and values. At the same time, education has imbued the people with commitment to modernization and citizenship. Increased educational opportunities have made upward social mobility possible, and the middle class has expanded as a result.

Koreans' belief in the value of education is attributed in large part to the emphasis on credentials that prevails in Korean society (Kim & Rhee, 2007). Diplomas are frequently regarded as the most important criterion for employment, marriage, and interpersonal relationships. Educational achievements are considered as a means to upward social mobility, and this has pressed the Korean family to invest for educational success. In this sociocultural background, the role of parents in supporting their children for education at home remains a prominent feature in Korea. Regardless of their socioeconomic status, Korean parents are willing to sacrifice for their children's education. Mothers especially show unselfish devotion to education as a critical feature of their parenthood. Educated Korean mothers do not hesitate to take on menial labor to make money for their children's tutoring. They wait in front of cram schools (tutoring schools) at midnight to pick up their children and stay up all night with their children while they study for exams.

However, in spite of their positive role in their children's education, official involvement of parents in schooling has been very limited in Korea within the highly centralized educational administration and school management system. Some parents are willing to cooperate with schools for providing school programs like extracurricular activities and volunteer to manage after-school programs. But the opportunity for parents to participate in school policy-making processes has not been fully provided since all kinds of policy-making as well as resource allocation have been controlled by the central and local governments. Therefore, most parents are satisfied with communication with teachers in charge of their children, the most common type of partnership between parents and schools (Pang et al., 2003). Communication is focused usually on school programs and student progress or their academic and behavior problems.

The fundamental change in these practices was initiated by the educational reform in 1995. The so-called 5·31 Education Reform proposed the school councils in its comprehensive educational reform package in order to expand autonomy of individual schools. With all the rhetorical push toward globalization, administrative devolution provided an ideological rationale for educational reform (Kim, 2005). In fact, decentralization and deregulation have become a new way of thinking about how to run schools around the world during the last few decades. Within the global educational trend of neoliberalism, the Korean government claimed to advocate educational reform to increase school autonomy.

The neoliberal policy framework in education was expected to raise the school accountability, and in turn, to improve the quality of education. Since the education system has been under the strict control of the government, school autonomy has been seriously undermined by numerous governmental regulations. This has made it difficult to provide diverse educational programs and meet the different needs of individuals. There have been many arguments that a rigorous decentralization policy is critically needed for the country's educational improvement (Kim, 2005; Lee,

2006). In this context, the school council was introduced to enforce autonomous and responsible school-based management through broad participation of various stakeholders of education.

Since it was first introduced in 1995, the school council has been established nationwide in every elementary and secondary school of Korea. School councils aim to encourage broad participation of family and local community in decision-making processes about school management. The basic policy frameworks and strategies of the 5·31 Education Reform have been maintained up to the present, and the school council has been stably settled down in the basic structure of the governing system of education. However, the evaluation and review of the experiences to run school councils are mixed in terms of parent–school partnership development. This chapter presents the background, roles, and characteristics of the school council in Korea and examines its possibilities and limits in parent–school partnership development.

Background of the Korean Educational Reform and the Institutionalization of the School Council

The formal education system in Korea follows a single track of six years in elementary school, three years in middle school, three years in high school, and four years in college or university. Elementary education is free and compulsory. Upon reaching the age of six, children receive a notification of admission to a school in their residential area. Upon entrance to elementary school, children automatically advance to the next grade each year. Free, compulsory middle school education began in 1985. Middle school graduates have two options broadly: to attend an academic general high school or a vocational high school. Those who are admitted to a vocational high school cannot transfer to an academic high school. But there is no restriction on vocational high school graduates entering higher education institutions. Therefore, overall student selection and screening are reserved until candidates are selected for colleges and universities. This system of contested mobility resulted in a continuous increase in the demand for educational opportunities.

Based on the social demand for educational opportunities, the Korean government has expanded the education system as a part of national development plans. Therefore, the rapid educational expansion was proceeded by the government-led economic developmental plans, which directly reflected on educational policy and planning since the 1960s. Korea has been able to achieve high economic growth by increasing the input of labor and capital, which requires the government to play an active role. In this government-led strategy, which is based on the growth of large-scale industry, the government has been highly centralized and interventionist (Kim & Rhee, 2007). The approach has been reflected in Korea's educational development process.

In this context, the educational administration system of Korea has been highly centralized and dominated the main sectors of education. Within the system, the priority had long been given to the interest of the government and school administrators

who support and provide services, rather than to the interests of those who teach and learn in the classroom (Kim, J., 2000; Kim, Y., 2000). The Ministry of Education (MOE) has been responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies related to all levels of education, and individual interests of parents, students, and educators should be subordinated to broader public policy objectives. Therefore, the government-led, supply-side educational policy based on the centralized administration system has gradually led to rigidity in the education system.

There is no doubt that education systems in Korea, organized and operated according to bureaucratic control by the central government, have not been able to respond to the changing global economic environment based on knowledge-based industry. The growing impact of globalization with the financial crisis in East Asia, have changed the policy environment of Korea since the 1990s, and the rigidity of its education system was recognized as a stumbling block for innovation (Kim, 2005). At the same time, there was a rising call for a more flexible education system from the civil society. Citizens' interest and participation in solving political and social issues increased in tandem with the formation of the middle class.

Meanwhile, the neoliberal administrative reform in education is a global trend today. In fact, the past three decades have witnessed a dramatic change in thinking on how best to run schools across many nations. The interest in national central control over schooling which has been maintained since World War II has been reversed. Prior to the mid-1970s, to centralize educational services of all kinds was supported as a way to modernize nations. But, propelled by irresistible promises of greater administrative efficiency, lower costs, and the greater democratic participation of citizenry, national governments and those who advise them have turned to the image of devolving more power and administrative responsibilities to local government and individual schools (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). The virtual devolution of central educational authority around the world has influenced policymakers of Korea.

Under the sweeping neoliberal policy movement, the highly centralized and interventionist approach of the Korean government which has been reflected in the past educational development process became the target of education reform. It was considered that top-down education policies which caused loss of autonomy, and accountability should be transformed to meet the challenge of the global economy. In this background, educational autonomy at the local level began to be promoted by the legislation of 'the Local Education Autonomy Act' in 1991 (Ministry of Education, 2000). With the legislation, educational administration became decentralized at least in terms of the educational governing structure. The Ministry of Education (MOE) substantially delegated much of its budget for planning and major administrative decisions to local authorities.

Following the legislation, the idea of school-based management was introduced to change the closed educational administration system and to promote innovation and creativity of school management. The most important precondition for the school-based management system to work was the participation of the school community (Caldwell & Spinks, 1989). Based on broad participation, school-based decision-making was expected to enhance the school outcomes by raising the responsibility and accountability of schools. This expectation was based on the assumption that

school-based management makes possible for site schools to set up proper goals, and to secure diverse resources depending on their needs and capability, and to use resources more efficiently through collective decision-making (Yoo, 1995). In addition, the transformative leadership of principals was emphasized to materialize autonomous, self-management in academic, administrative, financial planning and practice (Chung, 1998; Rho, 1995).

In this context, the school council was suggested as an official organization for enhancing participation of principals, teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. The site-based, self-management through the school council was expected to weaken the hierarchical and bureaucratic control toward school, to empower teachers with autonomy and responsibility and to ensure the broad participation of parents and students (Harrison, Killion, & Mitchell, 1989; Jin, 1995). In order to meet the diverse educational needs of students, and finally to improve the quality of education, diverse stakeholders' participation in school management through the school council is considered inevitable.

Roles and Characteristics of the School Council

Acknowledging the need for an entirely new education system, the Presidential Commission on Education was established in 1995. The Commission subsequently announced a series of recommendations on reform measures. Following the Education Reform of May 31, 1995, the Presidential Commission for the New Education Community (PCNEC) was established in June 1998 to carry field-based reforms. In pursuing the objectives, PCNEC enacted 'the Law of Local Autonomy' and promoted the creation of a new education community where all citizens play an active role in education (MOE, 2000).

Various authorities over educational management of elementary and secondary schools, which had been transferred to the metropolitan and provincial offices of education, come to be gradually transferred to individual schools. It was intended that the school unit accountability system would be put into practice and the school-based budgeting system would be adopted to enable efficient and rational budget management based upon the educational plan of an individual school. In this process, the school council was institutionalized for participation of family and community in school administration and financial management. Within the framework of a comprehensive education reform, it was crucial to establish a major body responsible for evoking the participation of the major stakeholders, since changes at the school sites could not be brought about and sustained without active participation of all parties involved. In this respect, the reform procedures focused on a process beginning at the grassroots level, encompassing all concerned parties.

Along with the top-down education reform, demand for the right to participate in the process of educational decision-making came also from parent organizations. There were two representative parents' bodies, which were influential in education at the national level: the 'National Parents Association for True Education' organized

in 1989, and the 'Parents Solidarity for Realization of Human Education' established in 1990 (Korean Educational Development Institute, 1998). These bodies suggested improvement of educational environments, enhancement of educational autonomy, and expansion of parents' right and participation under the name of 'parentocracy.' Parentocracy reflects the ideology that education must conform to the wishes of parents and maximize diversity and choice while rejecting the attempts to sustain a state monopoly and a uniform service (Brown, 1990). Parent organizations have dealt with various educational issues and led public opinions. For example, they have been actively promoting political actions against pending educational issues, offering educational seminars and classes, publishing newspapers and bulletins, monitoring mass media, and counseling parents and students (Kim, 2004). With the maturation of the civil society represented by various non-governmental organization (NGO) movements, parents' official involvement in school management gained recognition by the establishment of the school council in 1995.

The school council comprised of teachers, parents, and community leaders was introduced into some model schools in 1995. It was spread to schools in cities in 1996, and to local towns in 1998 (KEDI, 1998), and has been implemented in most public and private schools by 2001. It is a collective decision-making body through broad participation of teachers, parents, and community leaders in the important decision-making process about school management. It is composed of a chair, 2 vice chairs, and 5–15 members depending on the school size. The ratio of composition is 40–50% of parents, 30–40% of teachers, and 10–30% of community leaders (MOE, 2000). The principal is an ex officio member, and community leaders are appointed by recommendation of parents and teachers among the experts in accounting, finance, law and school administration, or local businessmen.

Its main functions are clarified in Article 32 of Law of the Elementary and Secondary Education. The school council is to deliberate school budget, review financial accounts, raise school funds, propose elective courses, and other after-school programs and consider the school charter, regulations, and rules (MOE, 2000). And also, it reviews other important agenda about school lunch, community education, lifelong education programs, etc. It can create subcommittees for deliberation on important agenda and also establish spontaneous subsidiary parent associations. Besides, it has power to elect board members of the local education office and the head of the city and province education office and to recommend personnel when inviting the principal or teacher to work in the school. Principals of public schools are appointed through a promotion system in general, but open recruitment system was restrictively allowed since 2007. Along with the open recruitment system, it became easier for principals to bring competent and congenial teachers from other schools. Public school teachers are usually rotated every five years, but invited teachers can work longer at the same school.

The role of the school council became more important under the former government which strongly pushed for neoliberal regulatory reform. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST) under the President Lee Myung-Bak enforced market-friendly reform measures based on 'the School Autonomy Implementation Act' legislated in 2009 (MOEST, 2009). It is assumed that unfettered

open competition between schools will raise school accountability and educational standards. They include the assurance of autonomy in operating school curriculum, an invitation system of principal and teacher appointment, and expansion of autonomous high schools, which have discretionary power to operate schools and to recruit students. Policymakers envisioned the school councils to work as a democratic decision-making apparatus that would transform the control-based school management practices to a more innovative system (Jang, 2007; Yang, 2006).

The recent educational policy to diversify general high school types in line with the School Autonomy Implementation Act has created a new environment to strengthen the role of school councils. According to the high school diversification policy, the general high schools have been differentiated and classified into special purpose high schools, foreign language high schools, autonomous private high schools, and general high schools. The policy aims to increase school choice of families and to raise academic excellence within the neoliberal policy framework. As the high school system is differentiated, substantial efforts to provide more and better educational programs are made by school units and various resources in the community are mobilized to enrich educational programs. These results accord with the policy goal of school-based management.

School councils were designed as a way of building quality into the education environment through expanded partnership formation between parents and schools. Whereas the central government's authority diminishes gradually as it takes on the role of an overall internal coordinator as a result of restructuring administrative functions, the autonomy and responsibility of local governing bodies are increasing dramatically. In the long run, the reform policy aims that the education system should be revised in a way that actively guarantees the choice of educational consumers by reorganizing the school system to meet the diverse demands and needs of students and parents. Besides, it intends that schools with increased autonomy in school management will increase diversity in school education, which is currently standardized. It assumes that school choice is expanded by competition between schools, and as a result, the quality of education is improved. The school unit accountability system will be put into practice and the school-based budgeting system will be adopted to enable efficient and rational budget management based upon the educational plan of an individual school.

Possibilities and Limits of the School Council in Parent–School Partnership Development

New pattern of parents'–school partnership formation appears in accordance with the school council (Kim, 2004). Apparently schools, parents, and community increasingly share experiences with each other, and interact in various ways, and these activities are also extended to school management. The involvement of parents and community members as decision-makers are apparent in school councils. Parents'

right to participate in the school decision-making process is secured by legislation, and parents are now able to have official channels to communicate with schools and to expand their influence on children's education. For example, power over the curriculum, personnel management, and budgeting, which had continuously rested with the higher administrative authority, was delegated to individual schools to a certain extent, and parents can substantially influence school management through school councils.

Since the school council system was introduced, various studies have examined its operation conditions, impact factors, and outcomes. According to research (Kim, S., 2000) conducted in its initial stages, more than 90% of teachers and parents who participated in the survey responded that the school council was necessary. And regarding the role of the council, respondents indicated that expanding school autonomy in management was the most important. They also recognized that as a result of the parents' participation through school councils, new school culture promoting parents' participation was created, the opportunity for parents' participation in school management was expanded, the parents' influence on decision-making process was increased, and conditions for activating parents' participation including supporting parents' organizations were built up. More recent surveys also showed that school councils have contributed to increased transparency and accountability in school management (Kim & Kong, 2007; Kim & Min, 2012; Park, 2007). They expected that the council would increase the opportunities for families and community members to participate in school management, diversify educational programs, and promote the school autonomy and sense of community.

Whereas many researchers have reported various positive outcomes, other studies reveal political dynamics and struggles in the running process of the school council and its negative effects (Kim, 2005; Jang, 2010; Jung & Park, 2005). These studies show that a series of conflicts and discordant situations have occurred. Sometimes mutual distrust leads to parents' resistance.

First of all, the council members often have conflicts over the leadership sharing. The management of school councils is especially posing new challenges to school principals (Kim, 2004). Because effective partnerships need to change various aspects of Korea's education system, to formulate new goals based on a common understanding of what needs to be changed will be a challenge for all partners in the council. Under the conventional bureaucratic management system, the authority of principals used to be almost absolute. But, the school council has changed the leadership of principals. In this process, opposing opinions between principals and teachers are sometimes acute and can cause conflict and antagonism. For example, from time to time there were serious conflicts between principals and teachers who belong to the Korean Union of Teaching and Education Workers (KUTEW). As a left teachers' union founded in 1989, KUTEW has urged liberal educational reforms and come into conflict with the educational administrators. Divided opinions between them have also vast impact on the other members of the school council and make trust building between members difficult. In this process, it is important for principals to show leadership to reconcile conflicting interests and to adjust their former priorities and value new expectations.

On the other hand, if an authoritative principal takes the lead in the deliberation process, parents and community members have difficulties in voicing their opinions and consequently, the scope of parents' participation on agenda setting and decision-making is very limited (Han, 2013). These difficulties that school council members experience have originated from the deep-rooted educational administration culture of Korea. The long practice of centralized bureaucracy has concentrated all power to the government bureaucrats. As a result of this administrative culture, the central power is still retained and the traditional influence patterns at the site level are not easily changed as intended.

In practice, central government's direction and control for schools continued and impeded site management of schools (Jang, 2010). The recent controversy about the government designated history textbook shows a good example. The government is in the process of adopting a national history textbook despite opposition from most parents and schools. The adoption of the state-issued history books is considered one of the policies that end up the left-leaning nature of existing versions of Korean modern history. In this regard, the ideological rationale of school-based management has not been given much administrative support in terms of how to develop goals and tools necessary to link school council activities to better school outcomes.

The lack of knowledge and expertise of parent council members regarding the school management is another factor to restrict their participation under the bureaucratic culture (Chang, 2002; Kim & Min, 2012). Specific knowledge and relevant expertise are necessary to review agendas such as school budget deliberation and school personnel policies. Most parents and community members do not fully understand the agenda on the table due to the lack of information and experiences. Therefore, they usually advance their ideas about minor issues such as athletic uniforms and school excursions and do not actively participate in agenda-setting and decision-making processes (Han, 2013; Kim, 2007). In this situation, council meetings often proceed with reporting and explanation rather than discussion and deliberation. Parents feel uncomfortable to express their opinions and hesitate to ask questions. They are not sure about their power and likely to become frustrated by the ambiguity and skepticism of new arrangements.

The above-mentioned problems are relevant to all parent members, but low-income families are more likely to experience difficulties. This problem is also related with whether parent council members are elected representatively regardless of their social strata, or whether schools have the mechanism for collecting diverse opinions of parents who are not the members of the council (Kim, 2004). For example, it is not easy for parents of low achievers or working-class families to express their concerns in school matters. Parents approach the family–school relationship with different sets of social resources. The resources tied to social class such as education, occupational prestige and income, play an important role in facilitating the participation of parents in schools (Lareau, 1987). Middle-class parents who involve actively in schooling seem to offer an educational advantage to their children while working-class parents who turn over the responsibility of education to teachers and schools negatively affect their children's achievement. In this respect, the fact that many case studies (Jang, 2010; Kim, 2007; Shin, 2003) report against the purpose of broad participation of

parents implies family–school relationships through the school council may work as critical links in the process of social reproduction.

In this context, it is not clear whether parents' active involvement in school education is a general tendency in most high schools. Recent studies find that neoliberal educational reform has worsened socioeconomic inequalities during the last ten years. The diversification of high school types has substantially caused stratification in the secondary school system of Korea (Kim & Kim, 2014) and seems to widen the achievement gap by student's social class (Baek & Kim, 2007; Kim, 2012). Considering the difficulties of working class parents' involvement in school matters, it is necessary to study extensively about family–school relationships in schools positioning at lower layer of the stratification system.

One more issue regarding the representativeness of the school council is whether student representatives should participate as school council members or not. There is no consensus yet, community council members usually oppose the students' participation while teachers and parents are relatively positive about it (Shin, 2003). Along with the extensive and representative participation, each school's efforts to increase parents' interest in the council's activities should be preconditioned for development of parent–school partnerships. However, some schools do not report the agenda discussed to each family from time to time (Chang, 2002). The lack of communication seems to occur in low-income community schools despite the necessity of family–school partnership to improve school outcomes. Therefore, more effective and diverse ways to communicate to student families should be used to share information about schooling and to encourage their concerns and participation.

Conclusion

Parent–school partnership is a relatively recent event in Korea, and therefore, schools have restrictively responded to the needs of parents and local community. Korean parents are strong supporters of their children's school education and play an important role at home and for some parents at school as well. However, the long practice of centralized educational administration has limited the capacity-building efforts of individual schools based on the broad participation of school community members. In this context, Korea has undergone a series of education reforms, and the most comprehensive one was started in the mid-1990s. One of the most distinctive features of the reform is that the Korean government has recognized the importance of enhancing parent–school partnership and taken the lead in promoting the partnership. For this purpose, the school council was introduced as a part of the education reform.

In other words, this new pattern of partnership should be understood in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical context of the recent educational reform of Korea because it came from the whole idea of educational reform of administration and management system toward more decentralized school-based management (Kim, 2004; Pang et al., 2003). It is meant to promote changes in both the structure of school management

as well as in the nature of school programs and has been extensively implemented. The reform procedures have focused on a bottom up decision-making procedure, encompassing all of the stakeholders including teachers, parents, and community leaders.

There are mixed evaluations about how much the school council contributes to autonomous school-based management system by promoting parent and community participation as shown in this chapter. Particularly, critical reviews pay attention to the lack of representativeness and expertise of the parent council members, and the power struggles and conflicts in the process of school council management. But, it is fair to say that there is a tendency that partnership between family and school through school councils has strengthened although there are still many issues awaiting to be solved at the same time. School councils have shown possible ways to pursue creative school management based on the needs of students and to develop democratic self-governing educational system through parents' voluntary participation.

Until recently, parents' high respect for their children's education regardless of their socioeconomic status has been positively working as a type of social capital in Korea which can be mobilized for educational success at both national level as well as individual level. In this respect, the role of school councils to maximize family and community capacity is more important in average general high schools rather than selective high schools. To handle the problem of widening achievement gap between schools, it is important for school communities to share educational accountability and increase effectiveness of school management through partnership among stakeholders. Also it is expected to promote local autonomy in each school and to enable schools to provide diverse programs that reflect the needs of individual communities. For this purpose, more focused studies are needed into specific mechanisms that best suits each school for more successful schooling for all.

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Chapter 11
Parent Involvement in Schools Along the USA–Mexico Border

Toni Griego Jones

Abstract This chapter reports on findings related to parent involvement in schools along the USA–Mexico border, specifically the neighboring states of Sonora in Mexico and Arizona in the USA. Historically, significant numbers of students from Sonora enrolled in Arizona's schools. However, as the economy in the USA slowed in 2009, Sonora began to experience a return migration from the USA and schools there began to receive students from schools in Arizona. This return migration became evident in a 2009 Fulbright-Garcia Robles study on classrooms in Sonora and data from subsequent studies in 2010 and 2013 confirmed the increasing numbers of students enrolling from the USA as well as effects on Sonoran schools. Data from all three studies identified the need to attend to parents as well as students in the transition from one educational system to another in at least three areas: administrative support, bilingual language support, and identity development.

Keywords Parent involvement in schools · Transborder studies
Migration across national borders

A Common Geographic Region

The great Sonoran Desert of North America includes the State of Sonora in Mexico and the State of Arizona in the United States of America (USA). Together these states comprise a common geographic unit that has an ancient history of migration within the Desert region. There has been a political border dividing the American and Mexican parts of the Sonoran Desert since 1848 when the treaty between the USA and Mexico divided the region but familial ties and common interests still promote migration back and forth across the region. Until recently, the direction of migration had been mostly northward from Sonora to Arizona resulting in significant numbers of Mexican immigrant students enrolling in Arizona schools. The northward

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migration accelerated during the 1990s reaching a peak of 12.8 million in 2007 (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). After the severe economic recession of 2008–2009 in the USA, the northward direction of migration from Sonora to Arizona began to change as Mexican immigrants started returning to Sonora. Shifting political sentiment in the USA together with anti-immigrant legislation in Arizona during the 2000s and increased scrutiny along the Arizona–Sonora border fueled the exodus of Mexican migrant and immigrant families from Arizona and, although many left Arizona for other parts of the USA, a steady number headed south to Sonora. According to the Instituto Nacional de Migracion (2009), the repatriation of Mexicans increased 8.7% from 2007 to 2008. By 2009, a survey conducted by the Sonoran Secretaria de Educacion y Cultura (SEC) identified approximately 2000 students who had attended schools in the USA were enrolled in Sonoran schools between 2007 and 2009 (SEC, 2009). The northward migration had begun to slow down and the return movement back to Mexico accelerated so that by 2015, there was a negative flow between the USA and Mexico. There were more Mexican immigrants going back to Mexico than going north to the USA. According to the PEW Research Center, a nonpartisan research organization in the USA, one million Mexican immigrants and their families (including children born in the USA) left for Mexico. Data for the same period show an estimated 870,000 Mexican nationals left Mexico to go to the USA, a smaller number than the flow of families southbound from the USA to Mexico (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). The majority of Mexicans who left the USA for Mexico between 2009 and 2014 (61%) left of their own accord and cited family reunification as the main reason for their return while 14% said deportation from the USA was the reason for their return (Ibid.).

This chapter reports on findings from research conducted in Sonora at the peak of immigration to the USA in 2008–09 and subsequent research in 2010 and 2013 when the return migration to Mexico accelerated. The first study was funded by a Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Fulbright Garcia Robles award, and the purpose was to support Arizona teachers in schools heavily impacted by immigration from Mexico, primarily from Sonora. Based on the belief that knowing more about the prior school experiences of Sonoran immigrant students would be helpful to Arizona teachers, the study was conducted during the academic year 2008–09 and results of that study spawned the other studies in 2010 and 2013 that specifically investigated the returning families and students who were then entering Sonoran schools.

Theoretical Framework for Fulbright-Garcia Robles Research

In educational literature, there is agreement that teachers need to understand and build upon students' prior experience and background (Arends, 2007; Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Students' prior knowledge and experience includes what Arends

has defined as the total knowledge and experiences gained during the course of individuals' lives and what they bring to a new learning experience (Arends, 2007). Students' prior experience is particularly important when teaching immigrant children who come from educational contexts very different from those found in their host country. In working with immigrant students, teachers' understanding of prior knowledge should include not only curricular content knowledge and skills but also the way students have learned to conceptualize education and schooling, and how they approach formal and informal learning. Unfortunately, USA teachers' understanding of prior school knowledge of immigrant children is often lacking and children who are uprooted from schools in their home countries begin to feel invisible in USA schools, lost without the sense of who they were as students in their home country (Griego-Jones, 2010; Griego-Jones & Martinez-Briseno, 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1997). Since education and schools reflect the values and expectations of society, the broader sociocultural context immigrant students carry with them is as important for teachers to understand as prior curriculum and classroom instructional practices (Banks, 2001; Hollins & Torres-Guzman, 2005; Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Nieto, 2008; Valdez, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). This broader context includes how parents are used to interacting with teachers and administrators in schools. To summarize, in theory and in practice, it is important for teachers to understand and utilize immigrant students' prior knowledge and educational background in teaching so that students can build on what they already know.

In order to support Arizona teachers who were teaching Mexican immigrant students from Sonora, the author received a Fulbright Garcia Robles grant to study Sonoran schools and classrooms during the 2008–2009 school year. Before going to Sonora, the author conducted a needs assessment of teachers in Arizona schools that had significant numbers of Mexican immigrant students to understand what they specifically needed and wanted to know about schooling in Sonora. The needs assessment showed that 76% of the teachers (elementary, middle, and high school) said it would help them plan and teach if they knew more about the prior schooling of their Mexican immigrant students. Some of the most frequently asked questions by teachers were about how Mexican parents were involved in their children's schools or if they were involved at all. Teachers wanted to know if parents visited schools in Sonora, if they had parent–teacher conferences, if they volunteered in classrooms, helped children with homework, and did they care about grades? These specific questions of USA teachers about the prior school experience of Mexican immigrant students have been asked since the mid-1960s when Mexican and other immigrant students started appearing in USA schools. At that time, the needs of immigrant students were addressed in Title VII of the 1968 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (The United States Congress, 1968). This federal legislation included provisions to address needs of schools that were receiving large numbers of immigrant students from Mexico, indeed from all over the world (Griego-Jones, 2016; Lyons, 1995). Title VII of ESEA provided funding for the education of English language learners (as immigrant children who did not know English were called) and included specific programs for involving immigrant parents in schooling. Since

then reauthorizations of the federal legislation have provided funding to schools with large numbers of immigrant students, some funding is specifically targeted for immigrant parent involvement. Many of these funded programs for immigrant parents focused on teaching about the structure and governance of American schools and about parents' rights reschooling for their children. All schools in the country were required to translate school information and announcements into the home languages of immigrant parents. Although this legislation was helpful to facilitate communication between immigrant parents and schools, USA teachers continued struggling to connect with immigrant parents, often because of language differences but also because of a lack of common understanding on the part of teachers and parents (Lyons, 1995).

Methods of Inquiry

A qualitative approach was used to collect data in the Fulbright-Garcia Robles study during the 2008-09 academic school year. Data were collected from observations of 55 classrooms and from interviews with the teachers of those classrooms. Thirty-eight classrooms were in elementary schools (5th and 6th grades), and seventeen classrooms were in the middle school (7th, 8th, 9th grades). Observations and interviews took place in urban and rural areas throughout Sonora with field notes recording classroom practices from the start of the school day till the end of the school day. Teacher interviews were done immediately or as soon as possible after the classroom observations and followed an established protocol that asked questions about teachers' goals, philosophies of education, preparation for teaching, curriculum, planning, assessment, use of technology, and parent participation. Current and historical documents from the Sonora State Secretary of Education Office also provided contextual background for the classroom practices observed as did several visits to normal schools (Teacher Preparation Schools) in different parts of the state.

Data analysis was ongoing from the first classroom observation until the last, and after the study was completed. The basic "unit" of analysis was the classroom and patterns that emerged across classrooms throughout schools in different geographical areas of Sonora and across grade levels. In-field analysis involved what LeCompte and Schensul (1999) identified as a basic set of procedures in ethnographic research, that is, inscription, description, and transcription (pp. 14–20). In the inscription phase, the researcher sought to note and record what the Sonoran teachers and students did and wrote running descriptions of daily classroom practice. Field notes on classroom observations were reviewed after each classroom visit, at the end of the visits to a given school, and weekly as were the transcriptions of teacher interviews. This led to narratives of events, behaviors, activities, interpretations, and explanations that gave a "more or less coherent representation of an observed cultural reality" (Clifford, 1990, p. 51). Teacher interviews were transcribed, and these transcriptions included notes about how teachers interacted with parents. In analyzing data from classroom observations, an inductive process was used to determine patterns emerging from that

data. Findings were then organized and reported in what LeCompte and Schensul (1999) described as a narrative or story form (p. 80).

Results and Discussion

Analysis of data from classroom field notes, from teacher interviews, and the historical documents from the Sonora Secretary of State's office showed that Sonoran parents were indeed involved in their children's schools. Each semester at both elementary and secondary schools parents were invited to formal conferences to discuss student progress but teachers also contacted parents whenever necessary. There were many informal meetings observed during classroom observations especially at the elementary level. In elementary schools, students were dismissed when teachers set aside class time to hold meetings with parents of students in their classes. Parents sat at their children's desks as if they were in class and teachers discussed issues and took questions from parents. At the secondary level, teachers in all subjects scheduled time to meet with parents. As in the USA, some teachers complained that the parents of students they really needed to talk with did not attend.

Arizona teachers wanted to know if teachers assigned homework in Sonora because many teachers had difficulty getting students to return homework to them. From the author's classroom observations and teachers' interviews, it was clear that homework was indeed a key part of instruction in Sonoran classrooms and assigning homework seemed to be a more common practice than in the USA. Teachers assigned homework almost everyday in all core subjects, and most students did take their homework back to school the next day. In most cases, each child's homework was graded by the teacher each day in class and homework contributed heavily to a student's course grade. Few students did not do their homework and if they did not, teachers spoke to their parents about it. It appeared that most parents monitored their children's homework and encouraged them to complete assignments. Since this was a concern for Arizona teachers, the question arose as to why USA teachers had difficulty getting Mexican immigrant students to return homework. This could be answered in the way teachers in the two countries conceptualize and deal with "homework," not by what parents do or do not do. In the USA, most teachers consider homework to be practice, to be reinforcement of skills, and concepts taught in class (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). They expect parents to make sure students do the homework and return it to class. However, when students return homework assignments, teachers in the USA do not generally read and grade the homework immediately with the students. Instead, they generally ask students to place homework in a designated place and teachers later review homework outside of class, sometimes giving feedback and sometimes not. In Sonora, on the other hand, teachers considered it an integral part of instruction for each class. They graded homework individually, talking with each student during class, giving immediate feedback and grades. Homework grades contributed to the final course grade so homework was important to students and to their parents. The immediate, personal feedback from

the teacher was important to students, and they appreciated the personal attention from the teacher. In the USA, students do not have the personal, individual, and immediate contact with teachers that Mexican immigrant students are used to and this could be a reason some do not return homework consistently as in Sonora.

Parents who visited schools in Sonora appeared to be welcome and comfortable in the schools. At the elementary level, it was common to see parents walking their children to school and talking briefly with administrators, staff, and teachers in the morning and after school. During classroom observations, teachers often interrupted class to talk with parents who came to the door and teacher–parent relationships appeared to be cordial. This is in direct contrast to USA schools where visitors to a school, parents or otherwise, have to sign in at the main office, get permission to enter the school and be escorted to their child's classroom. Visitors, even parents, are rarely allowed to just enter classrooms and interrupt the teacher during class time, only in an emergency.

A common example of Sonoran parents' easy participation in schools was their attendance at the weekly honors ceremony held throughout Sonora. Every Monday morning throughout Mexico everyone in all schools—students, teachers, and staff—gathered in the school's courtyard for a ceremony honoring the Mexican flag. Students who had earned good grades and behaved well were chosen to carry the flag, and it was a great honor. A number of parents attended this ceremony in all schools observed in the Fulbright Garcia Robles study. One day while talking with parents at a middle school during their school colors ceremony, mothers explained that the different colors of student uniforms were associated with the year (grade) in school, and they asked the author what colors students wore in middle schools in Arizona. They were surprised to hear that uniforms are not generally worn in public schools in the USA. They wondered how parents and community knew what schools the students belonged to and what grade level they were in and they remarked on the expense of having to buy regular clothing for school especially for large families.

Observations of lunchtime and playground activity offered insight to another aspect of parent involvement in schools, that is, financial support of their neighborhood school. Even though public schools are free in Sonora, parents contribute financially by donating items such as furniture, bookshelves, books, lockers, and sports equipment and by operating small stores on the school's playground during recess and lunch. The stores were small booths where students and teachers could buy drinks, packaged snacks, and homemade lunches that parents brought to sell during lunchtime and recess. Proceeds from the sales went to the school to buy needed supplies for teachers and children. During recess and lunchtime, parents often sat with their children's teachers to eat while the children were on the playground.

Finally, there was one other significant finding not directly related to parent involvement in Sonoran schools but one that has the potential to change the traditional role of parents in Sonoran schools. This was the identification of a number of children coming from the USA, primarily from Arizona, to enroll in Sonoran schools. In the Fulbright Garcia Robles study, the author found instances of students who had prior experience in USA schools, mostly in Arizona, in a third of the 55 classrooms observed. However, in only a few schools did the principal or teachers

tell the researcher they had students who came from the USA. In these few instances, administrators asked for help in reading and understanding documents such as report cards and transcripts from USA schools. They also wanted to know more about what was taught at particular grade levels in the USA so they could appropriately place students in classrooms in their schools. Teachers were also interested in what curriculum and instruction are like at particular grade levels in Arizona and in other parts of the USA, and they asked about grading procedures. Indeed, they wanted to know all about how USA schools operate.

In interviews, teachers were asked if they had students who had been in USA schools in their classrooms but few knew or admitted they had students from the USA. Most often, the author found out about students from the USA during the classroom observations and usually it was other children who reported that classmates had been in American schools at some point in time. In several cases, teachers were not even aware that some of the students in their classrooms had attended schools in the USA. Two of the 55 teachers in the Fulbright study denied having migrant students in their classrooms saying that they did not have those people in their neighborhood. In fact though, in both cases classmates happily identified students who had come from Arizona that year or in recent years. It appeared that if a teacher had received a newly arrived student that year, there was no way they knew that the child had come from the USA. There was no record or document to tell the teacher that students had prior experience in American classrooms. Even so, at the elementary level teachers seemed more aware of students from the USA than at the secondary level. This could be because elementary children tended to talk more with their teachers than secondary (middle school) students and because elementary teachers are with their students all day while middle school teachers have multiple classes and go from one classroom to another to teach their lessons. In almost all cases where students had been in Arizona schools, the children themselves told the author names of schools in various cities.

The phenomenon of returning students enrolling in Mexican schools during this time was not an isolated case in Sonora as there was evidence in 2008 that students from throughout the USA were beginning to return and enroll in schools throughout Mexico with numbers varying from state to state (Zuniga, Hamann, & Sanchez Garcia, 2009).

In the classrooms, language was a distinguishing characteristic of the returning students and was often the first visible sign that students were from somewhere other than Sonora. Since the returning students were of Mexican origin, they looked like other students in the classroom and had Spanish names. However, when they spoke Spanish, it was apparent that they were not from Sonora. When asked about the students coming from the USA, teachers reported that students did not know correct Spanish grammar and had difficulty writing even though some students were able to communicate very well orally in Spanish with teachers and other students. Students clearly had learned Spanish at home and used it with family but had not developed the academic Spanish proficiency needed for classroom work. In talking with students who had been in the USA, Sonoran students immediately recognized the difference in their classmates' use of Spanish. Sonoran students often teased the new enrollees

about it, more so at the secondary level than in elementary schools but it appeared that this resulted in some reluctance to speak up in class on the part of returning students, and they preferred to speak only with friends. Teachers expressed concern about the level of Spanish but thought it made sense since the students were coming from an English speaking country. In most cases, teachers expressed confidence that the students would quickly pick up Spanish with very little directed help or instruction.

Classmates were impressed by the former USA students' ability to talk with the researcher from Arizona and their new classmates' ability to speak English seemed to be held in high esteem. Still, students from the USA did not always get high grades in English because of factors like behavior, not knowing English grammar, or not completing homework assignments. The relative proficiencies and dominance of the students' two languages affected performance in all subjects and also affected how they were perceived by teachers and classmates and how they thought of themselves.

Returning students, even those who had started their education in Sonora and were going back, seemed to be unsure of their identity in their new context. Children born in the USA who had only experienced schooling in the USA had nothing to remember about schools in Sonora. The Mexican classrooms were very different in appearance, organization, and resources. For example, classrooms in Sonora are all exactly the same, rectangular in shape with windows along the outside wall and one door opening to an inside patio. Students sat in rows facing the front of the room, and there were few books or printed materials available for students to use in classrooms. In contrast, Arizona classrooms could be any shape or configuration and are filled with print and media equipment students can use. Students are often free to move around instead of sitting in rows facing the teacher. Children missed things like American school cafeterias where meals were available and they could visit with friends. Perhaps because returning students looked like everyone else in physical appearance, they did not usually stand out until they began talking, behaving differently, or asking questions about common things like the candy stores on the playground or bathrooms in schools. Cultural practices and personal possessions such as games, clothing, technology, and ways of dressing were subtly different and noticed.

Sonoran children and teachers did not always show respect for differences in speech and behaviors of the children returning to Sonora. Observations indicated children were often teased and excluded because they lacked Spanish proficiency and understanding of cultural norms. Ironically, in the USA the students were regarded as Mexican, but in Mexico they were not accepted as Mexican, and they found themselves struggling to find their identity. In fact, their identity seemed to be something of a hybrid as their lives so far had straddled two cultures. In the USA, they were part of the larger Mexican American minority group and they had found solace and solidarity with that population. Now that they were in Mexico they were thought of as American Mexicans.

Sonoran teachers tended to think of the returning students as poor students when the children had trouble with Spanish or in understanding other content areas. Some middle school teachers even displayed impatience with having students who were not prepared for their classrooms. Still, for the most part teachers were concerned about

helping students catch up, particularly in Spanish as they recognized proficiency in reading and writing Spanish was a key to student success. Teachers who reported interventions used strategies like tutoring after school or assigning other students to help with assignments. A few elementary teachers reported that they paired the incoming student with a Sonoran "friend" who was charged with translating and explaining when necessary.

Enrolling students from the USA was a new experience for principals and teachers in Sonora in 2008–09. When families returned to Sonora, the role of returning parents in registering their children in schools created a new aspect of parent involvement. Parents had to find a school in the neighborhoods where they were settling or resettling. They would go to the nearest school to enroll their children but sometimes administrators turned them away or asked for documents that parents did not have documents such as report cards, transcripts, attendance records from Arizona schools and other types of documents required by Mexican schools. In one middle school, the principal refused to admit returning students, claiming there was no more room in the school.

Although originally intended to help Arizona teachers, findings from the Fulbright Garcia Robles study resulted in recommendations for Sonoran educators as well (Griego-Jones, 2010). The Fulbright study also initiated subsequent research in Sonora on returning students and their parents in 2010 and 2013. A 2010 study of 11 middle school students and their parents found that the increasing numbers of returnees were "making the invisible more visible" as teachers were becoming more and more aware of their presence in classrooms and as administrators were needing to respond to more returning parents (Martinez & Griego-Jones, 2014).

Students' relative language proficiency in Spanish and English surfaced as key in all three studies. In the Fulbright Garcia Robles study, returnees were comfortable in English and Spanish, even though judging from observations, their English skills were not uniformly good or "at grade level" in the USA. The 11 children interviewed in 2010 did not use English in interviews but children interviewed in 2013 used both English and Spanish. In 2013, students reported they maintained contact with friends in Arizona via technology and they intended to maintain their English skills. Some even expressed their intention to return to Arizona to attend the university there (Martinez-Briseno, 2014). Those who were USA citizens would have the right to do so.

Parents interviewed in 2010 used Spanish and those in 2013 chose which language they wanted for interviews and used mostly Spanish (Martinez-Briseno, 2014). Parents did not appear to be concerned or worried about their children learning Spanish. While in the USA though, Mexican immigrant parents were usually very concerned about their children learning English. This was something they cared about and monitored in the USA (Velez & Griego-Jones, 1997). The urgent need to develop academic Spanish proficiency was a primary concern of teachers but did not seem to worry parents as they knew their children spoke Spanish and expected this would develop when children returned to Mexico.

Parents in the 2010 and 2013 middle school studies talked about how they had experienced difficulty with the process of registering their children in Sono-

ran schools, more with the central bureaucracy requirements than with the local school. However, other than saying they were returning because of economics and immigration status, they did not elaborate on schools in Arizona and did not have documents from the Arizona schools. The study in 2013 also showed that the southward migration accelerated after 2009 and both studies supported results of the 2008–09 Fulbright study regarding classroom experiences of students returning to Sonora. However, the focus of both the 2010 and 2013 studies was not on teachers and classroom experience but on communicative practices of students and parents who were returning to Sonora from Arizona and their experience enrolling in Sonoran schools. In both studies, parents' perspectives identified difficulties enrolling students in Sonoran schools. They told of administrative obstacles to registering children in nearby schools and described problems with enrollment because they did not have required documentation such as previous grade reports or identification papers. The obstacles parents encountered were bureaucratic requirements from the national and state administration level rather than the school level, but the school administrators had to follow central administration guidelines. Strict regulations requiring documentation in Mexico are handed down from the National Secretaria de Educacion and corresponding state government agency, in this case the Sonora Secretaria de Educacion y Cultura. Unlike USA schools where student records and requirements are held at the local school, district, and state levels, the Mexican system is far more centralized at the federal level so many of the requirements could not be waived at the local level in Sonora. This presented difficulties for parents and school administrators as many families left suddenly to avoid deportation. Also, parents may not have realized the need for records and documents since USA schools do not require extensive documentation to enroll students in schools. Further, students in all three studies grew up in households where Spanish was the dominant language so when they were in USA schools they would have been identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and placed in special programs designed to teach English as a Second Language. Therefore, the returning students may not have had the usual documents other USA students would have because they would not have been in "regular" classrooms and would not have studied the same curriculum as other students in Arizona and other states.

Finally, parents and students in 2010 and 2013 studies said they appreciated that teachers in the USA paid a lot of attention to their children that teachers looked for ways to help students understand content. Children and parents felt they had made good grades in Arizona. In 2013, children whose parents had specifically prepared them for returning to Sonora and schools there had an easier experience than children who had been abruptly taken from schools because of the fear of deportation from the USA. These parents had explained the differences in the physical and academic environments of schools in Mexico. Further, most returning families had relatives in Mexico and had visited there, some only once and others often so students' prior experience in Sonora varied across families (Martinez-Briseno, 2014).

It is important to note that in some cases the "returning" students were indeed born in Mexico, started school there, then moved to the USA and were now going back to Sonoran schools. In other cases, however, students enrolling in Sonoran

schools were born in the USA (and therefore are USA citizens), started their school careers in the USA and then went with their families to Sonora after 2007. In their cases, they were not returning to Mexican schools; they had never attended schools in Mexico. Instead they were entering a brand new context and system of schooling, one they had never experienced even though their parents were returning. The term returning students is used in this chapter to describe students moving from the USA to Mexico recognizing that not all the students thus described are, in fact, returning to Mexico. Instead, they are going to schools there for the first time—all of their previous schooling had been in the USA. Even if children had visited Sonora with their families often, those children who were born in the USA and had only attended schools there were not really returning. Still, the term "returning" and "retorno" are used in studies and literature on families migrating from the USA to Mexico acknowledging that this transnational phenomenon is extremely complex and not easily described.

Conclusions

From 2007 to the present, increased migration of families from the USA to Sonora, indeed to all of Mexico, has significantly impacted Mexican schools in ways that are unprecedented (Zuniga et al., 2009) and this may affect the traditional way that parents deal with schools. Families returning from the USA have placed new demands on schools that are not used to dealing students from other countries, especially when they come suddenly and with no records of prior schooling. Sonoran schools are having to adjust to a population of students not seen before, and parents' needs and expectations are different now as well (Valdez Gardea, 2015).

Parental involvement in Sonora at the time of the research reported in this chapter can be characterized as supportive of schools but deferential to professional educators. Parents' role was to support teachers and schools by making sure their children attended school, completed homework, behaved respectfully to educators, and by contributing to financial needs of neighborhood schools. Parents did not make demands on teachers or administrators. Their role was to support and help them in educating their children and to monitor their children's behaviors. This was in keeping with the literature on parents' traditional role in Mexican schools (Valdez, 1996; Zarate, 2007). However, the influx of students from a different linguistic and cultural educational system is now creating demands on teachers and administrators in Sonora. Data identified the need to attend to families—parents and students—in their transition from one educational system to another in at least three areas: (1) administrative support, (2) language support, and (3) identity development and emotional support.

Administrative Support

Administrators needed to be more flexible in admission requirements and procedures. Parents (and teachers) need help in finding appropriate schools and classroom placements for their students. The bureaucracy needs to be streamlined to enroll the increased numbers of students, some of whom come without the usual school documents such as report cards, grades, and transcripts. Parents' biggest concern and complaint were the difficulty of enrolling their children in Sonoran schools, of finding a school that would take them and administrators who would welcome them. Facilitating the enrollment of returning students requires more cooperation between Arizona and Sonoran educators and educational systems to make transitions smoother. The historical ties between Arizona and Sonora should facilitate cooperation in supporting transitioning students and parents. In 2013, the Governors of both states signed a Memorandum of Understanding to pursue the establishment of electronic records transfer system for secure and prompt transfer of official school transcripts and other official records. There is also a long established Arizona-Mexico Commission that focuses on economic development along the border but also has an Education Committee working on a process for the collection and distribution of educational data on both sides of the border by 2017. As of 2016, some schools in northern Sonora provided orientation sessions for parents and the Sonora Secretaria de Educacion y Cultura has developed a bilingual parent/student guide to help orient newcomers to Mexican schools.

Language and Literacy

Both Sonora and Arizona businesses value bilingualism in economic and research partnerships. The mixture of language proficiency in students is something that Sonoran schools need to attend to if they are to promote bilingual development of the returning students. Since the returning children have already acquired some English, they have unique potential for truly becoming bilingual if they are afforded opportunities to develop English as well as their native Spanish proficiency. Sonoran schools do offer English as a Foreign Language in primary and middle schools with the intention of having students become proficient in using English for particular purposes in their future. Teachers and parents both can promote continuing contact with English speaking friends in Arizona through letters and internet exchanges, and teachers can provide English language materials for students to use on their own in schools.

Parents as well as Sonoran teachers have a role in developing literacy in Spanish. Parents should continue to speak Spanish with their children and encourage reading and writing in Spanish at home as well. Because parents know the society, they can also facilitate access to public libraries, churches, museums, and other institutions for books and reading materials. The Internet and television are primary sources of both languages on both sides of the border.

Identity and Emotional Support

Findings regarding students' identity reinforce the need to pay attention to migrant and immigrant students' social and cultural contexts as they transition to Mexican schools. The types of support systems that worked for Mexican immigrant students in the USA could help support retornos in Sonora—support systems such as translators, parent advocates in schools, newcomer centers, and bilingual resource teachers. Parent and students' accounts of caring teachers who paid attention to them in the USA in all three studies also support the importance of emotional support for returnees. Caring teachers and friendships supported them in their USA experience and can support them in their new schools in Sonora. A few schools reported student "clubs" promoting friendships, using classmates and teachers to help in social settings as well as academic.

The turmoil students experience in changing schools always requires strong emotional support at home from parents. Even when changing schools within one's own country, changing schools can be difficult, even traumatic. Many of the "returning" students were actually moving to a completely different country, not just a different school system. The change necessitated emotional support from the parents who were familiar with the schools in Sonora from their own youth. In the transnational movements of adults, the feelings of children caught in the flow are not always noticed but have deep and potentially lasting effects. Additionally, students who are USA citizens may intend to return to the USA, specifically mentioning their aspirations to attend the University of Arizona. They have the right to do so, but parents and educational institutions on both sides of the border will have to support those aspirations.

More Research

Staff development for teachers in understanding cultural differences between schools in Sonora and the USA is one area for research and development. Aside from parents, teachers are the critical agents in integrating students from the USA into their new schools (Griego-Jones, 2012). Learning more about how to develop bilingual/bicultural skills in students is a new idea in public schools in Mexico even though Mexican schools require students to take classes English as a Foreign Language from the primary grades on. Most classroom teachers themselves though have not learned a foreign language, and there are relatively few certified EFL teachers. Part of teacher preparation and development must address curriculum and instruction and attitudes about teaching the increasing flow of students from one place to another.

The transnational dynamic of students moving across borders from one educational system to another also needs more understanding. How does the movement affect parental involvement in schooling? What is needed from parents in each country? What are the expectations for parents in each country? How does parent involve-

ment change as a result of the movement? The movement northward to the USA in the twentieth century definitely initiated changes in American educational policies and practice in order to meet the needs of immigrant children and parents. Now the migration southward to Sonora has the potential to also initiate major changes in policy and practice in Sonora.

Globalization is pushing educators to deal with diversity in a variety of ways everywhere in the world. The role of parents in the transnational integration of students into new schools is also critical to the educational success of students and must be better understood and recognized. As the students in Sonora illustrate, the strength of children to adapt is there if schools can meet them halfway. Perhaps the ancient historical ties that bind Arizona and Sonora within the Great Sonoran Desert region may provide the framework for resolving the educational trauma of crossing transnational borders.

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Part IV
Home-School Relationships in Teacher Education

Chapter 12
Creating New Spaces for Pre-service Teachers to Engage with Parents: An Australian Coteaching and Cogenerative Dialoguing Project

Linda-Dianne Willis

Abstract This chapter examines how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing between the parents of two students and a teacher at a low socio-educational advantaged secondary school in Australia created interrelational spaces beyond those traditionally available for engaging a pre-service teacher. Building on Pushor's notion of parent engagement and using Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital, the chapter describes and analyzes how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing created a culture of dialogic exchange. This ongoing exchange saw the parents' and pre-service teacher's capital assume new value, enabling their knowledge, ideas, and dispositions to meld with the teacher's as they collaborated to teach a class of students which included each of the parent's sons. The findings shine light on the positive unexpected ways the pre-service teacher learnt about parent-teacher engagement through coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing with the parents and teacher. The findings also signal the benefits and challenges of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing for better preparing pre-service teachers for their future work with parents especially in low socio-educational advantaged schools.

Keywords Pre-service teacher · Parent-teacher engagement · Coteaching
Cogenerative dialoguing · Dialogic exchange · Field · Capital · Habitus
Low socio-educational advantaged schools

Introduction

Pre-service teacher education in Australia has been a particular focus of ongoing government reform over the past five years. A 2014 Commonwealth Government review of teacher education conducted by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advi-

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sory Group (TEMAG) and subsequent publication—*Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers Report*—declared improved teacher quality was fundamental to enhanced student learning outcomes and hence Australia's economic future and prosperity (Department of Education & Training, 2014). The TEMAG report made thirty-eight recommendations: Key among these was the need for teacher education programs to better prepare pre-service teachers to engage with parents[1] and the community. This recommendation was based on submissions from practicing teachers, principals, Australia's premier parent bodies, and the general public which singled out parent engagement as an area for increased priority during teacher preparation. The report noted "…the critical role school leaders have in supporting successful engagement with parents, and the need for schools to be proactive, accessible and responsive to the parents of their students" (p. 26). The report also recommended that all pre-service teachers be assessed against the graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

Developed in 2014 by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the APST have placed new accreditation requirements on all professional teachers. Higher education providers (HEPs) are required to provide enhanced quality assurance to education authorities and prospective employers that graduate teachers are able to demonstrate the different standards in practice. The APST explicate elements of high-quality teaching framed as seven standards under three domains—Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Engagement. Three of these standards include a focus on parent engagement. The first standard from the Professional Practice domain concerns planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning. Against this standard, graduate teachers are expected to: "Describe a broad range of strategies for involving parents/carers in the educative process" (APST: 3.7). The second, also from the Professional Practice domain, states that graduate teachers need to: "Demonstrate understanding of a range of strategies for reporting to students and parents/carers and the purpose of keeping accurate and reliable records of student achievement" (APST: 5.5). The third from the Professional Engagement domain concerns engaging professionally with colleagues, parents/carers, and the community. Graduate teachers are required to: "Understand strategies for working effectively, sensitively and confidentially with parents/carers" (APST: 7.3). The TEMAG report's emphasis on the APST has signaled to HEPs the need to equip pre-service teachers with effective strategies for describing and explaining curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to parents (i.e., APST: 3.7, 5.5). These strategies are essential for graduate teachers to enable parents to actively support their children's development and learning. At the same time, HEPs need to ensure that graduate teachers are furnished with effective strategies for developing quality contact and relationships with a range of different parents (i.e., APST: 7.3). The TEMAG report's recommendations have heightened imperatives for HEPs to strengthen their focus on parent engagement in teacher education programs by reviewing opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage effectively with parents during practicums.

[1]The term "parent" refers to a student's biological parent or grandparent, guardian, caregiver, or other person with primary responsibility for a student's well-being (Willis, 2013).

Background

This strengthened emphasis on parent engagement in pre-service teacher education programs in Australia sits within broader research in which governments, educators, and parent organizations across the world—including the United States of America (USA), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), Scotland, Australasia, continental Europe, and Scandinavia—have endeavored to find ways to enhance meaningful parent involvement in schools (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This desire has been fueled by consistent cumulative evidence from quantitative and qualitative studies over several decades in which parent involvement in student learning has been strongly linked with benefits for students academically, socially, and emotionally (e.g., Bodovski, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lightfoot, 2003). Mapp (2004) reports that such benefits are not restricted to primary school students since parent involvement also has positive effects on secondary school student education. Research also supports the case that high levels of parent and community involvement are associated with high-performing schools (Jennings & Bosch, 2011). These schools are distinguished by higher rates of student achievement and success irrespective of factors such as students' gender, ethnic background, stage of schooling, or parents' education levels (Jeynes, 2005). The well-documented dividends of parent engagement have added impetus to calls for HEPs to better prepare graduate teachers for this essential aspect of their future professional work.

However, the kind and form that parent engagement can take to encourage positive student learning outcomes across a range of disparate contexts is less clear (González & Jackson, 2013). The complexity of studying the topic is exacerbated by a lack of unanimity about what parent engagement actually entails (Lueder, 2000), leading to a multiplicity of terms with which it is associated including *involvement*, *participation*, *communication*, *partnership*, *collaboration*, and *cooperation*. Three of these terms—involvement, participation, and engagement—appear most commonly in the literature and are also preferred when describing the Australian context (see Holmes, 2009; McConchie, 2004; Muller & Associates, 2009).

Parent involvement, for example, refers to when parents in Australia and other countries such as Canada play auxiliary school roles (volunteers, fund-raisers) (Lueder, 2000). These traditional roles are considered unidirectional in that family resources such as time, energy, money, and expertise are called upon to directly or indirectly support school programs and activities (Lueder, 2000). Parent participation is a more active form of parent involvement that denotes when parents in Australia and other countries, including the USA, Canada, and the UK, play representative roles (McConchie, 2004). These may be sitting on school advisory councils, parents and citizens associations, and fund-raising committees to assist in decision-making about how schools operate (McConchie, 2004).

Parent engagement, however, requires reconceptualizing the involvement and participation practices described above to enable parents to play new and different school roles. Muller and Associates (2009) describe parent engagement in Australia as promoting "shared responsibility for education among parents and teachers, where the

learning process transcends the school environment and the formal curriculum" (p. 26). This engagement involves parents and schools working together to create optimal learning conditions for children through such avenues as having high expectations, talking about educational and career aspirations, and discussing the different roles parents, teachers, and students can play in school and at home (Muller & Associates, 2009). Despite the range of programs available to encourage parent engagement in Australia, information about the success or otherwise of these initiatives is limited (Muller & Associates, 2009). Pushor's (2007) Canadian research is useful for deepening understanding about what parent engagement may entail. She contends that engagement challenges educators to enter an interactive school community:

> …to create with parents a shared world on the ground of school—a world in which "parent knowledge" and teacher knowledge both inform decision-making, the determination of agendas, and the intended outcomes of their efforts for children, families, the community, and the school. (Pushor, 2007, p. 3)

According to Pushor, engagement requires the development of interrelational school spaces so that parents are enabled to work side-by-side with teachers to encourage their children's formal and informal learning for the benefit of all concerned. Although the notion of parent engagement is supported in Australian schools, Holmes (2009) found that parent involvement and participation practices continue to be the norm. Parent engagement, as described by Pushor, is therefore rarely experienced in Australian schools and classrooms.

It is not surprising that opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience parent engagement may be rarer still. Indeed, the limited potential of graduate teachers to develop and sustain quality relationships with parents was noted in Australian research by Saltmarsh, Barr, and Chapman (2015) and in American research by Jordan, Orozco, and Averett (2002). These researchers signal a lack of instruction about and theorization of parent engagement during pre-service teacher education programs as areas for future improvement. Research by Willis (2013) into coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing as a possible vehicle to facilitate parent-teacher engagement between a teacher and two parents also included a pre-service teacher. In light of the foregoing discussion, this chapter revisits the data collected and analyzed during Willis's investigation to explore the following questions:

- What did a pre-service teacher learn about parent-teacher engagement from participating in coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing?
- How can parent-teacher engagement be conceptualized to enhance future professional practice for pre-service teachers?
- What are the benefits and challenges of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing for better preparing pre-service teachers for their future work with parents especially in low socio-educational advantaged schools?

Coteaching and Cogenerative Dialoguing

Coteaching emerged in Canada and the USA in the late 1990s as a promising mechanism for teaching secondary school science (e.g., Roth & Tobin, 2002). Its success as an effective service-delivery approach has subsequently seen it take root in other countries including Australia, Ireland, and Sweden (see Murphy & Martin, 2015). Although coteaching is sometimes considered synonymous with other joint teaching practices such as "collaborative teaching" or "team-teaching" (see Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013, p. 110), coteaching in this chapter refers to times when individuals willingly pool their collective expertise for the express purpose of continually expanding and deepening teaching and student learning opportunities. Hence, coteachers accept coresponsibility for coplanning, copractice, and coreflection (Murphy & Martin, 2015). The term, *coteaching*, is deliberately not hyphenated to distinguish its collective, collaborative nature (Murphy & Martin, 2015). Coteaching mostly includes cogenerative dialogues. Typically scheduled after coteaching episodes, these conversations provide an interactive social space for individuals to talk, listen, and learn from one another across multiple boundaries including age, gender, and educational background (LaVan, 2004). During cogenerative dialogues, all participants are encouraged to adopt an open disposition to the views and ideas of others through inclusive respectful practices such as attentive listening, allowing each other equal talk time, and fully discussing one issue before moving on to subsequent ones (LaVan, 2004).

Conceptual Framework

Informed by a sociocultural perspective (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978), Willis (2013) deployed interpretive ethnographic case study research to investigate the kind and quality of relationships that developed among the different educational players during coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing. Pushor's (2007) notion of parent engagement and Bourdieu's (1977) interrelated sociological concepts of field, habitus, and capital were used to describe and explain what and how culture and identity—individual and collective—developed throughout the case.

The first of Bourdieu's (1977) notions, *field*, refers metaphorically to particular physical sites but also to the structures and resources associated with those sites. Grenfell (2007), a student of Bourdieu, describes a field as being: "a structured social space based on the objective relations formed between those who occupy it, and hence the configuration of positions they hold" (p. 55). Drawing on the work of Tobin (2007), Willis (2013) regarded coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing as a field because the parents, teacher, and pre-service teacher convened for a collective purpose (coteaching, colearning), and certain roles (providing information), activities (coplanning, debriefing, reflecting), expectations (curriculum requirements), tools

(curriculum documents), and artefacts (mutually-constructed lesson plans) characterized their shared participation in the particular space.

The second of Bourdieu's (1977) notions, *habitus*, describes a system of durable and transposable dispositions that individuals develop in response to the different fields they encounter. Through socializing and interacting in different contexts, individuals come to recognize how a certain field may operate and manifest this knowledge in the ways, mostly unconscious, that they think, speak, and act. Habitus was a useful concept in Willis's (2013) research given that entering the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field challenged the parents, teacher, and pre-service teacher to assume new roles to those traditionally played in Australian schools.

Bourdieu's (1977) third concept, *capital*, refers to an individual's knowledge, skills, and other conscious and unconscious ways of operating effectively in certain fields. Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital borrows from the notion of economic capital, and hence, different forms—cultural and social—possess certain exchange value within a given field. Knowledge of capitals can therefore explain how individuals such as parents and pre-service teachers are included or excluded from effective engagement in different fields (education, schools, classrooms) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In Willis's (2013) study, capital provided a further conceptual vantage point for understanding and explaining how knowledge, ideas, and dispositions were exchanged (or not) during coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing.

Describing the Research

Willis's (2013) research initially involved John,[2] a teacher, and Dale and Ruth, two parents of students in his year eight (age = approximately thirteen years) English and Studies of Society and the Environment (SoSE)[3] class. John, Dale, and Ruth were purposefully selected (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This enabled the construction of detailed descriptions and explanations based on their views and experiences of participant relationships that developed throughout the research rather than generalization to the population of parents and teachers by and large (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given his understanding and practical knowhow of coteaching from having cotaught briefly with the researcher at a previous school where they both worked as teachers, John was selected opportunistically (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Compared to another teacher who may not have cotaught, John's cultural and social capitals presented considerable opportunities and resources for the parent-teacher engagement research. John had taught for seven years. When asked at the beginning of the research to elaborate on his previous experiences with parents in schools, he indicated his interactions were limited to mostly officially organized times such as

[2] All names except the author are pseudonyms.

[3] In Queensland (Australian state), SoSE consists of learning areas in the humanities and social sciences such as history, geography, civics and citizenship, indigenous studies, and environmental education.

parent-teacher interviews (semiformal interview, June 30, 2008). John's account of his experiences with parents reflected traditional parent-teacher involvement practices (Lueder, 2000). Such practices in secondary schools are described by Lightfoot (2003) as distant and formal where opportunities to develop authentic parent-teacher relationships through meaningful substantive discussions are rare.

In choosing Dale and Ruth, typical case selection was adopted; that is, they were considered "normal or average" of other parents who could provide insights into how coteaching and cogenerative dialogues may facilitate parent-teacher engagement (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). After an invitation to all parents of students in John's English and SoSE class to participate in the research, three originally volunteered. After informal discussions between John and each of them however, one withdrew because of work commitments. In a follow-up formal discussion with John and the researcher, the remaining volunteers, Dale and Ruth, were considered suitable for contributing positively to the research outcomes. In the first instance, their personal and work circumstances afforded each a degree of flexibility to participate: Dale was a single mother and medical scientist who worked a nine-day fortnight, while Ruth deployed her business and administration qualifications to manage a plumbing business jointly with her husband. Importantly, they each expressed strong interest in learning about coteaching and were motivated to participate in the research to improve student learning outcomes. Hence, it was hoped that Dale and Ruth's various life experiences, skills, and educational backgrounds would enable them to bring a blend of cultural and social capitals to the research. The research coincided with Dale's first and Ruth's third year of being a parent of a secondary school student. Both parents had volunteered to work in the classroom and held different leadership roles, for example, Craft Group Coordinator (Dale) and Parents and Citizens' Association President (Ruth), throughout the time their respective sons had been in primary school. Their previous contact and relationships with teachers thus mirrored traditional parent-school involvement and participation practices. Accordingly, they were considered representative of other parents at the school.

The research site, Bushland Park High, situated on the outskirts of a Queensland (Australian state) metropolis, comprised a public coeducational secondary school with a student population of approximately 1400. Demographically, the area surrounding the school was one of high growth with a population distinguished by "mature working age families with children" (Community and Social Planning Group, 2008, p. 47). The area comprised a high concentration of public housing dwellings (Community and Social Planning Group, 2008). Almost twenty percent of the local area's population consisted of residents who were born overseas with around fourteen percent from English-speaking countries such as England, New Zealand, and South Africa and six percent from non-English-speaking countries such as Germany, Italy, Greece, and China (Community and Social Planning Group, 2008). These percentages were generally reflected in the school's student population and specifically in John's year eight class. Although small numbers of students at the school identified as indigenous or refugees, none of these students participated in the coteaching research due to their lack of direct connection to: John through his teaching of other classes, the parent participants, or any of the students in his year eight class. More

detailed information about the school's student population can be gleaned from the school's *Index of Community Social-educational Advantage* (ICSEA). Developed to provide meaningful comparisons on annual Australia-wide literacy and numeracy tests, the ICSEA draws on research evidence linking student educational performance to characteristics of their family and school (MySchool, 2013). These include the education levels of parents, school location, and the socio-economic backgrounds of the students each school serves (MySchool, 2013). At the time the research data were collected, the ICSEA score for Bushland Park High was 984 compared to the Australian average of 1000 (ICSEA, 2008). This means that in 2008 the school identified as one of low socio-educational advantage.

The research spanned one year with Dale and Ruth coteaching and participating in follow-up cogenerative dialogues with John each week for twenty weeks over an eight-month period. Nada, a pre-service teacher in her final practicum of a four-year dual degree in arts and education at a nearby metropolitan university, joined the coteaching group in week three and participated in the research for seven weeks. She cotaught English and SoSE with John up to three times per week including one weekly session with Dale and Ruth. In total, Nada participated in five coteaching sessions (time = 70 min) and seven cogenerative dialogues (average time = 90 min) with John and the parents, that is, over sixteen hours contact time. Coteaching took different forms. When the parents were present, John and/or Nada often took lead coteaching roles to initially provide direct instruction before simultaneously facilitating small group work alongside Dale and Ruth. These roles were sometimes reversed with one or both parents leading aspects of cotaught lessons as discussed cogeneratively. At other times, each coteacher worked with particular student groups or operated different work stations through which students rotated. Hence, coteaching did not mean that the coteachers were "doing the same thing at the same time" but during these sessions shared responsibility for coteaching success and student learning (Murphy & Beggs, 2010, p. 16). For her part as the researcher, Willis initially played a facilitative role, providing the participants with professional development opportunities about coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing and the critical curriculum approach they adopted in the first part of the study. As the participants gained experience as coteachers, Willis's role changed to resemble a critical friend who offered the group support and encouragement (see Willis, 2013). In these ways, Willis sought to build the participants' capacity for translating their goals and ideas into meaningful practice throughout the study.

Data sources comprised video and audio recordings of cotaught lessons and cogenerative dialogues supplemented by semi-structured participant interviews and e-mail communication. Data were analyzed using qualitative techniques such as discourse and conversation analysis to identify patterns and contradictions for describing and explaining how culture and identity—individual and collective—developed among the participants (see Roth & Tobin, 2002). Quality criteria enunciated by Guba and Lincoln (2005) were adopted to provide assurance about the ethical considerations that infused the planning and conduct of the study.

Findings

To probe the questions posed earlier—What did a pre-service teacher learn about parent-teacher engagement from participating in coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing? How can parent-teacher engagement be conceptualized to enhance future professional practice for pre-service teachers? What are the benefits and challenges of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing for better preparing pre-service teachers for their future work with parents especially in low socio-educational advantaged schools?—the findings from Willis's (2013) research may be discussed from the perspectives of planning and roles and responsibilities.

The pre-service teacher, Nada, participated in the research when the parents and teacher cotaught a unit of work titled, *War and Refugees*. Although it was prescribed learning by the SoSE Head of Department, each year eight teacher retained pedagogical freedom over how their unit was taught and assessed. This created the opportunity for John to coteach with Dale and Ruth using a critical curriculum orientation. Teachers who adopt a critical approach to the curriculum are encouraged to position themselves as learners alongside their students so that together, through inquiry, they can identify unjust or unsustainable values and practices, propose alternatives, and instigate appropriate action to realize those alternatives (Hoepper & McDonald, 2004). Since such an approach views education as a means for improving society through collective rather than individual action, it was considered an appropriate vehicle for coteaching the war and refugees topic. The approach also easily accommodated the addition of a new coteacher, Nada.

When Nada joined the parents and teacher to coteach the *Wars and Refugees* unit, the group had already cotaught three classroom sessions and met to dialogue cogeneratively four times. Willis (2013) found that early cogenerative dialogues between the parents and teacher matched the characteristics described by Scantlebury, Gallo-Fox, and Wassell (2008) as *brainstorming*, where participants: "planned curriculum, discussed how to introduce the curriculum to students using various pedagogical approaches, and considered how those approaches should vary depending on the available resources" (p. 974). As a result of their brainstorming cogenerative dialogues, the parents and teacher had called upon their individual and collective cultural and social capitals to: encourage the students in John's class to share their personal immigration stories; invite a local federal member of parliament to speak to the class about immigration; contact another parent whose cousin worked with refugee families and arrange for him and a teenage refugee from Afghanistan to visit the classroom; organize a class excursion to a local simulated refugee camp run by a nongovernment organization (NGO); and develop ideas for Dale, in her professional role as a medical scientist, to lead a cotaught lesson on diseases typically suffered by refugees (Willis, 2013).

Throughout the initial weeks of her practicum, Nada experienced these different activities alongside the parents, teacher, and students. In week five of the cotaught unit, she subsequently convened with the coteachers for a special cognerative dialogue about possible ways the students could [re]present their knowledge and under-

standing of the war and refugees topic for assessment purposes. The cogenerative dialogue concluded with the decision that the students would work in small groups for a hypothetical NGO to complete four separate outcome tasks: Advertising Campaign, Education Pack, Grant Application, and Panel of Experts. These tasks would be presented at a War and Refugees Showcase evening to which the broader parent audience would be invited. Over subsequent weeks, the coteachers worked alongside the student groups to facilitate their research and production of the different tasks.

Being her final practicum, Nada necessarily took a lead coteaching role in many of these sessions. Working closely with John, she developed lesson plans which were then e-mailed to the coteachers so they could offer additional ideas or provide feedback before coteaching occurred. She also developed and/or sourced suitable resources to support cogenerated ideas and plans. One lesson involved using resources she accessed from an advertising agency where she worked part-time. The aim of the lesson was to assist the students to consider how they might develop each outcome task to reflect the work of their hypothetical NGO yet be suitable for their group's respective audience, context, and purpose. At the same time, the need to create symbols such as an NGO logo, agree on common color combinations, and adopt similar ways of presenting information had arisen during cotaught sessions when the students realized that such internal consistency across their four different outcome tasks was missing.

To assist student collaborative decision-making and problem-solving about these aspects, Nada brought to the lesson before and after versions of a pamphlet used for a letterbox drop by a local company. The company had approached her workplace about ways to improve their original pamphlet to appeal to the changing demographic of their client base. This shift in target audience enabled Nada to focus student attention during the lesson on aspects of critical literacy as they compared and contrasted the original and updated versions of the pamphlet. For example, she and the coteachers discussed with students ways that images, words, space, size, and positioning of information together with the interrelationships among these different elements combined to enhance or constrain meaning-making for readers/viewers (Cotaught lesson, September 5, 2008). This discussion opened up further conversations not only between the coteachers and students but also between and within student groups as they interrogated their assessment tasks using critical questions about what, how, and why they might present certain information. These questions included: What response do we want from readers/viewers/listeners? What pictures/music can we use to convey the emotions involved and evoke empathy? What cultural aspects need to be considered? These discussions challenged student groups to continually [re]develop their outcome tasks in critically framed ways to reflect the different audiences, contexts, and purposes concerned. Ultimately, the students completed their outcome tasks to [re]present their learning at the War and Refugees Showcase evening. Accounts by the coteachers, students, their parents, and Bushland Park High's school administration team showed the event was successful in allowing the students to demonstrate critical learnings and insights from their investigations of the topic (Willis, 2013).

After her practicum, Nada was asked in a semi-structured interview if she would consider coteaching with parents or bringing parents into the classroom in similar ways to what had happened in the study. She replied that the experience had been "excellent," explaining that:

> I think you can do so much more when you have more people and to bounce ideas off other people and to have it evolve and the different things that the people bring to the class that you wouldn't necessarily think of—like the kids learn so much more from it. They probably haven't just learnt about refugees, they've learnt life skills and probably whole different layers of life skills.
>
> (Semi-formal interview, September 17, 2008)

When asked about the benefits of coteaching with the parents and teacher, she added:

> Definitely the planning. Knowing where you're going and not necessarily the next week but the long-term planning which, I guess you usually do yourself, but I think being able to talk about something with someone else and they know the things you're talking about—the classroom you're talking about. I think that's really helpful and just being able to share and have a productive conversation.
>
> (Semi-formal interview, September 17, 2008)

Nada's responses highlight the benefits to student learning and the personal and professional value of coteaching to her pre-service teacher development. Her words—"the kids learn so much more from it" and "they probably haven't just learnt about refugees, they've learnt life skills"—highlight the knowledge and understanding of content, concepts, and skills such as those involved in research and collaboration gained by the students throughout the unit. Nada's words also signal the benefits of coplanning for seeing how "productive conversation" among the participants enabled mutual sharing to transform initial ideas for teaching and learning into later classroom reality. Her experience of these collaborative processes deepened her knowledge of the students and context—"being able to talk about something with someone else and they know the things you're talking about" while simultaneously strengthened her confidence with planning short and long terms—"knowing where you're going and not necessarily the next week but the long-term planning." As well, working alongside the parents and teacher expanded her capacity to teach in new and creative ways—"you can do so much more when you have more people and to bounce ideas off other people"—and increased the level of support she experienced in learning to teach by assuring her that she was not alone—"which I guess you usually do yourself" and "just being able to share and have a productive conversation."

Bourdieu's (1977) tri-fold notions of field, habitus, and capital provide conceptual tools to deepen understandings about the benefits and value of Nada's experience to her pre-service teacher development. Entering the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field with the parents and teacher provided a space for Nada to access shared information and ideas, contemplate new ways of thinking, draw on prior experiences, explore possibilities, and assess the challenges and limitations of suggestions (Scantlebury et al., 2008). In this field, each participant's cultural capital—knowledge, skills, dispositions—and social capital—networks of relationships

with others—assumed new value according to perceived benefits for coteaching and student learning about the war and refugees topic. Cogenerative dialogues enabled these capitals to be recognized as resources for subsequent use and deployment during coteaching. Through coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing, Nada therefore participated alongside the parents and teacher in a process of capital exchange. This process was cumulative and compounding given that coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing over several months created a dynamic space for ongoing multi-directional exchange of capitals among the participants and students. Nada's habitus, that is, transposable dispositions, as a pre-service teacher learning to teach, saw her exploit the manifold opportunities that coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing offered. Consequently, coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing with the parents and teacher enabled her to gain deep knowledge of teaching in relation to student diversity, classroom management, school operation, curriculum planning, pedagogical practices, and assessment strategies. Importantly, participation in the field allowed her to recognize her capitals for expanding the resources available to the parents and teacher to meet collective goals for coteaching and student learning.

At the same time, working side by side with the parents and teacher throughout this process allowed her to experience mutual corespect, coresponsibility, and solidarity with them. These resources increased her capitals for operating in the field and saw her develop new habitus as a pre-service teacher as her confidence for curriculum decision-making and enactment grew. Hence, Nada's account of her coteaching experience signaled an emerging "collective teacher identity" (Willis, 2013, p. 215). Not only were her decisions and actions rooted in the knowledge of the group's shared agenda but also made in the knowledge of their support; which they confirmed regularly in words of encouragement and thanks said personally or by e-mail. According to Muller and Associates (2009), engagement breaks down traditional barriers and opens participants to the possibilities of individual and collective growth. Similarly, Pushor (2007) conceives engagement as when participants, such as parents, play roles that seat them alongside teachers as integral and essential to educational processes in schools. Coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing enabled Nada to inscribe her role as a joint educator alongside the parents and teacher. The relationship was therefore one of increased significance and symmetry than in traditional arrangements involving parents, teachers, and pre-service teachers. Capital exchange among the participants continually expanded and built Nada's available individual and collective resources for coteaching and student learning to enable engagement between her and the parents and teacher.

During her practicum at Bushland Park High, Nada also worked in a non-cotaught classroom. In her semiformal interview, she contrasted this experience with coteaching:

> Looking at the year eights in comparison to the year tens, and they're a struggling year ten class, and they have strengths but their strengths are not in writing or reading. So, they're being forced to write and read and I think they would benefit from something like an inquiry approach with coteachers to actually feel like they can have success in something at school because half of them can't even write their opinions—I think they think that they'll fail anyway so why even try.
>
> (Semi-formal interview, September 17, 2008)

Nada's words highlight the challenges for her of teaching and learning in the non-cotaught classroom. A didactic approach where the year ten students were "being forced to write and read" saw them unable to draw on their "strengths." She not only described them as students who were "struggling" to achieve "success" but also noted how a seeming acceptance of inevitable failure had contributed to dispositions of not wanting to "even try."

Calling on Bourdieu's (1977) concepts, Nada's and the students' habitus in the year ten classroom aligned with the field of traditional classroom settings. The adoption of a mostly didactic teaching style characterized by unidirectional teacher-student interactions prevented her and the students from accessing the possible resources at their disposal including those of their parents and community members. Hence, exchanges of capital between Nada and the students were limited. Nada's suggestion that they "would benefit from something like an inquiry approach using coteachers" thus draws attention to the perceived yet unavailable potential academic, social, and emotional benefits to the students of coteaching. At the same time, her words—"they're being forced to write and read"—highlight the challenges she faced to reinvest capitals such as knowledge of coplanning gained from operating in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field in the non-cotaught classroom.

Apart from curriculum planning, data collected during Willis's (2013) case study research show that roles and responsibilities provide a useful vantage point for contemplating the benefits and challenges of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing, enabling engagement among educational players. For example, during her post-practicum interview, Nada was asked if she could comment on possible factors other than coplanning that may have contributed to the coteaching venture's success. She replied:

> Maybe the relationship that John has with the parents. I know he is the teacher of the class but in that environment it doesn't seem like it. He's not there saying, "This is what will happen." I think more, if anything, he steps back a little bit and accepts everyone's input which is also a good thing because if he were an overbearing teacher then coteaching probably wouldn't work.
>
> (Semi-formal interview, September 17, 2008)

Nada's observations echo findings by Willis about how the teacher, John, participated in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field. He recognized that entry into the field relied on his commitment to coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing principles and purposes. Described earlier, these are underpinned by a willingness to adopt an open disposition to the views and ideas of others through inclusive respectful practices. Willis found that during cogenerative dialoguing, for example, John spoke and acted in ways that evidenced attentive listening, reluctance to pass early judgment, reciprocity by empowering and encouraging the parents to communicate freely, and willingness to negotiate decisions and solve problems mutually. Nada's words—"he steps back a little bit and accepts everyone's input"—highlight how John reconstructed his usually traditional role to work alongside the parents to improve coteaching and student learning outcomes.

Casting a Bourdieusian lens over these findings, participation in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field saw John develop new habitus. He adopted a proactive rather than reactive approach, encourgaing an open trusting culture that saw him assume the identity of a knowledge producer alongside the parents (Willis, 2013). This built solidarity and coresponsibility among the group to enable ongoing exchanges of capital (Willis, 2013). His approach thus reflected the work of Pushor (2007) who describes parent-school engagement as when parents participate in and contribute to their children's learning together with teachers for the benefit of all concerned.

Compared to the participatory collaborative role John played, Nada's role in cogenerative dialoguing at times appeared contradictory. Although video recordings of these sessions show how she demonstrated active participation through comprehensive notetaking of ideas and information as well as nods of acknowledgement toward, and eye-contact with, the parents and teacher, data analysis reveals she spoke few words. Willis e-mailed Nada after she had returned to her university studies to ask if she could shed light on these data. In her response, Nada described herself as naturally shy and hence her tendency to observe and listen in group situations. She also indicated that not having been initially part of the group made her reluctant to contribute (Email communication, October 13, 2008). She further noted:

> I was also "only" a pre-service teacher and, whilst I never felt like I was separated from the group on this basis, I think I was more aware of being in that temporary position. As a young pre-service teacher, I would never go into a situation and claim to know how to achieve certain objectives. Everyone's ideas were so original and out of the box that I felt my university ideas were not relevant.
>
> (Email communication, October 13, 2008)

Although earlier findings in this chapter provide much evidence of ways Nada demonstrated coresponsibility for coteaching and student learning alongside the parents and teacher, her response highlights the challenges she experienced in her simultaneous roles as coteacher and pre-service teacher. In this regard, her words—"I was also 'only' a pre-service teacher" and "temporary position"—are telling. Of further note is the sentence: "Everyone's ideas were so original and out of the box that I felt my university ideas were not relevant." Here, Nada connects her perceived limited ability to adopt a critical curriculum orientation to plan for coteaching during her practicum with her university studies.

To conceive these findings in a Bourdieusian sense, Nada experienced conflict in needing to develop new habitus to work as a coteacher alongside the parents and teacher while negotiating her usual habitus as a pre-service teacher. Despite her effective participation in implementing the coplanned curriculum in the classroom, she remained subject to and limited by conventional expectations for her role as a pre-service teacher. This included the recognition that, as her supervising teacher, John was ultimately responsible for evaluating her teaching performance. According to Bourdieu (1977), habitus manifests in the form of dispositions that "mark social position and hence the social distance between objective positions" (p. 82). Dispositions that serve as reminders of this distance and the conduct required to maintain

it include notions of not "letting oneself go," not "becoming familiar" and "knowing one's place" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). Nada's words—"As a young pre-service teacher, I would never go into a situation and claim to know how to achieve certain objectives"—reflect Bourdieu's description of how individuals maintain social distance in different fields. Nada's participation in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field shows that she sought to exploit opportunities to learn to teach in ways that simultaneously preserved her habitus as a pre-service teacher operating in traditional university and school fields. Her sense of limits, developed from operating in these multiple different fields, helps illuminate how she negotiated the dynamics of coteaching with the parents and teacher. Her capacity to act (or not) relied on her weighing up—consciously and unconsciously—*what* capitals were available to her which included knowledge and understanding of *when* and *how* she could exchange these with participants operating in the same, different, or overlapping fields. This sense also assists to explain her minimal reinvestment of capitals gained from operating in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field in the year ten classroom described earlier. At the same time, it sheds light on her apparent frustration at the restricted number and range of learning opportunities afforded to these students compared with those made available through coteaching to the year eight students. This point increases in salience when seen against Nada's perceived lack of university preparation to use an inquiry approach for critically and creatively contemplating curriculum planning. In other words, Nada perceived her capitals for curriculum planning accumulated in the university field lacked exchange value in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field. Hence, she suffered habitus breakdown, finding she needed new and different knowledge and practices in the coteaching field that included parents compared with those she had developed at university. In this way, her ability to engage with the parents and inscribe her identity as a coteacher in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field was diminished.

Significance and Recommendations

Parent engagement is recognized in Australia and internationally as an area of critical importance for improving student learning and school success (Willis, 2013). This recognition has encouraged investigations into ways graduate teachers can develop and sustain quality relationships with parents. As a result, teacher preparation programs have been found wanting in areas such as targeted instruction on and theorization of parent engagement (Jordan et al., 2002; Saltmarsh et al., 2015). These findings parallel recommendations from the 2014 Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report in Australia which have placed pressure on higher education providers (HEPs) to strengthen their focus on parent engagement in teacher education programs. The recommendations have heightened imperatives for HEPs to review pre-service teacher opportunities to engage effectively with parents during practicums so that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) (AITSL, 2014) for graduate teachers are satisfied.

This chapter presented Australian research conducted during one pre-service teacher's practicum in a low socio-educational advantaged secondary school where she participated in coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing with two parents and a teacher. The research is significant for not only describing and explaining but also conceptualizing how the approach facilitated the development of quality participant relationships which enabled the pre-service teacher to contribute productively to the education of the year eight students involved. Pushor's (2007) notion of engagement and Bourdieu's (1977) conceptual tools of field, habitus, and capital were valuable for showing how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing, together with a critical curriculum orientation, encouraged a culture of dialogic exchange among the participants. Participation in the coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing field created dynamic interrelational spaces—especially brainstorming cogenerative dialogues—where knowledge of the students, curriculum, classroom, school, community, and one another enabled multi-directional exchanges of capital. As a result, the group's resources exponentially multiplied. The research shows how coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing enabled the pre-service teacher to access these resources as her knowledge, ideas, and dispositions melded with those of the parents and teacher as they worked together to enrich the curriculum and transform curriculum delivery. In the process, the pre-service teacher developed new habitus, assuming the identity of a knowledge producer coresponsible with the parents and teacher for enacting the war and refugees unit throughout all aspects of teaching and learning. The research unveils the rich opportunities coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing afforded the pre-service teacher to develop strategies relevant to positive parent engagement as she and the parents became more involved in the children's education and developed trusting supportive reciprocal relationships. The experience therefore points to an authentic way to enable pre-service teachers to satisfy the APST (AITSL, 2014) pertaining to parent engagement required of graduate teachers in Australia.

These findings take on further significance when the pre-service teacher's practicum experience in the year eight classroom is juxtaposed with her work at the same school in a year ten classroom. Unlike the cotaught classroom, the traditional classroom prevented her from entering into ongoing capital exchange with others during planning and teaching. In the traditional classroom, she thus recognized her capacity to create real-world contexts to assist these students to connect deeply with concepts, issues, and problems associated with their learning and develop quality relationships with parents, community members, and one another was diminished. This recognition heightened the pre-service teacher's awareness of the value of approaches such as coteaching and inquiry learning for not only developing challenging, personally relevant tasks for students but also encouraging positive learning dispositions. Adoption of these approaches would enable students in low socio-educational advantaged schools to acquire the kinds of knowledge and skills that the parent participants indicated throughout the research were necessary for their sons to succeed in the classroom and life beyond school (Willis, 2013).

This finding highlights the importance for HEPs to provide pre-service teachers with knowledge and experience of participatory approaches to expand the possible ways available to them during practicums to develop effective parent relationships.

Similarly, the findings signify the need for HEPs to place pre-service teachers with teachers able and/or willing to work in proactive collaborative ways with parents so they can experience ways to develop and sustain parent engagement. Apparent contradictions that emerged during this research because of the pre-service teacher's simultaneous participation in different fields are also significant for HEPs. These inconsistencies highlight the challenges of encouraging pre-service teachers to participate in new collaborative practices when prevailing teacher education structures are more outcomes- than process-focused. Cogenerative dialogues may provide a suitable answer to how pre-service teachers can be enabled to learn about collaboration and the implications such processes have for their changed roles and responsibilities in schools. Hence, further research of the potential application of these structures is needed.

This study provided evidence of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing as a realistic means to create conditions for engagement among parents, teachers, and pre-service teachers. Hence, the research expands knowledge, practice, and theory of parent engagement; coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing; and pre-service teacher education. Given the importance of parent engagement and its increased emphasis in pre-service teacher education programs in Australia and overseas, future research is needed to explore the potential of coteaching and cogenerative dialoguing for developing and sustaining quality parent relationships.

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Chapter 13
Teacher Education in Mongolia: Institutional and Social Factors Contributing to a Lack of Parental Involvement

Batdulam Sukhbaatar

Abstract This chapter reports results of a study that investigated how a primary education teacher education program at one of the three state-owned teacher education institutions in Mongolia prepares teachers for parental involvement. The study conducted document analysis, questionnaire surveys, and key informant interviews. Thirty-two primary education major senior students were surveyed, and 17 stakeholders were interviewed. Participants expressed their concerns about barriers to parental involvement and teachers' overall lack of skills in developing parental involvement approaches in schools. The student teaching practice was found to be what best prepared pre-service teachers for parental involvement, but their supervising classroom teachers also played a key role in shaping pre-service teachers' skills and attitudes. However, classroom teachers have dissimilar skills in and attitudes toward involving parents. In addition to teachers' lack of skills in implementing parental involvement activities, some institutional and social factors such as heavy workloads, a limited understanding of family diversity, gender issues, and social status of the teaching profession also contributed to a lack of parental involvement.

Keywords Mongolia · Pre-service teachers · Classroom teachers · Parental involvement practices · Teacher education

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Introduction

Many studies in the USA and elsewhere have shown that parental involvement is one of the main factors influencing children's academic achievement and social development (DeHass, 2005; Epstein, 2011b; Lemmer, 2007; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Uludag, 2008; Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, & Bowman-Perrott, 2011). There are many different ways that parents could be involved in their children's education. Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) stated that all types of family interaction with educators (policymaking, parent education, volunteer activities, fundraising and the simple exchange of information) can be used to describe family involvement. In addition to parental involvement types and activities identified in Western studies, Nguon (2012) reported three useful dimensions of parental involvement in Cambodian schools: school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and parental resourcing of schooling.

Parental involvement in Mongolian contemporary education can be divided into the following two eras: (1) the socialist era (up to 1990) and (2) the post-socialist era (from 1990 to the present). During the socialist era, education and social policies took priority because these areas were considered the engines of development (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). Teachers were pleased when their profession gave a good reputation in the society and good salary. The teacher was expected to be knowledgeable or wise individuals (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006), and teachers were well respected. Thus, "the high expectations mirror the honorable status of a teacher in Mongolian society" (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 137). Overall, during this period, parental involvement was systematically managed by the People's Revolutionary Party policies, and teachers worked in close collaboration with parents on children's learning and development.

The new system of market economy since the 1990s brought many changes to social institutions. State-owned enterprises were closed, and the sudden withdrawal of social services intensified. As a result of the economic shock, there were job losses in many sectors. Beyond these sudden changes, there has also been an increase in domestic violence, alcohol abuse, insecurity, and family breakups due to people migrating to seek employment (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2005). Now family patterns differ greatly from the past with the social and economic phenomena of divorce, with single parents, with lengthened work hours, with poverty, and with other changes that are impacting family patterns.

Family background can be an important factor influencing the level of parental involvement in their child's learning. Like in other countries, pre-service teachers' backgrounds are often different from very poor families, and new teachers may have little knowledge of the challenges disadvantaged parents face when they try to get involved in their children's education (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009), and most teachers start their career without an understanding of family backgrounds (Epstein, 2011a). For this reason, teacher preparation programs need to provide knowledge and understanding of the diverse lives of families and provide skills to promote positive home–school communication (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004; Epstein, 2011a; Ratcliff &

Hunt, 2009). However, facilitating effective collaboration of school and family is paid very little attention in many teacher education programs (Epstein & Dauber, 2011; Patte, 2011; Uludag, 2008); many programs do not provide the skills necessary to promote parental involvement (Mahmood, 2013; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Uludag, 2008).

When teachers are not well prepared, they often rely on very limited, traditional types of parental involvement (DeHass, 2005; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). This means teachers do not know how to organize parental involvement activities that lead to good results in parent–teacher collaboration, interaction, and reputation. According to Sosorbaram (2010a), classroom teachers in Mongolia restrict parental involvement to just a few traditional activities, such as parent–teacher meetings and expecting parents to provide financial support; hence, parents are likely to complain more about schooling than to participate more actively in supporting the school. Unless prospective teachers receive good education related to parental involvement in their teacher education programs, teachers will continue facing difficulties collaborating with parents.

Parental Involvement in Mongolia

Since educating children is a collaboration between school and family, parents can be a great help, especially for primary teachers working with younger students in the school system. Mongolia already has a number of activities that are traditionally used by teachers to facilitate parental involvement. Sosorbaram (2010a) surveyed more than 500 teachers and managers from rural and urban areas in Mongolia and identified the following regular parental involvement activities: (a) parents attending meetings, (b) parents sitting in classes, (c) parents helping decorate classrooms, (d) parents attending pedagogical workshops, (e) parents receiving regular reports on students, (f) parents competing in sports competitions or quiz contests, and (g) parents attending graduation day.

Both primary education teachers' responsibilities and parents' responsibilities are essential for children's optimal learning and educational achievement. Parents or caretakers have responsibilities for supporting and developing their children's talents and skills from their early years, for providing a learning environment, for collaborating with teachers, and for assisting with choice of profession (Mongolian State Parliament [MSP], 2002, Article 46.2.1.).

Learning not only goes on in classrooms, but it must continue outside the classroom at home. Therefore, beyond the common Mongolian practice of simply providing financial support, parents can also get actively involved in their children's learning (Sosorbaram, 2010b). One of the responsibilities of parents stated in the Education Law of Mongolia is to learn to teach their children at home (MSP, 2002, Article 46.2.4.). Parental involvement in school work done at home has been shown to improve students' understanding of what was taught and also was found to motivate students to learn more (Dashdolgor, 2011). Thus, practical parental involvement in children's learning at home is a valuable asset.

The project of supporting education in rural areas, initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science of Mongolia (MECSM) and implemented in 2007–2008 with financial support from the World Bank, discussed factors affecting lower academic achievement of primary school students. Sosorbaram (2010a) argued those factors could be categorized in the following ways: (1) related to teaching or teachers—33.3%, (2) related to parents—28.6%, (3) related to social issues—23.8%, and (4) related to students—14.3%. The factors related to teachers or teaching and parents make up the highest percentages. This raises questions as to how parents impact academic achievement and why teachers do not encourage parents and improve parental involvement.

A prime source of barriers to parental involvement is schools and families themselves. School staff and families usually have different perspectives on what is wanted and needed, and their lack of knowledge and skills about how to collaborate successfully creates the most crucial barrier (Lemmer, 2007; Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007). Furthermore, schools' and managers' practices and attitudes toward parental involvement influence classroom teachers' opinions and experiences. People tend to think that educating children is solely direct teaching at school (Sosorbaram, 2010b). In Mongolia, where academic competitions are very important and popular, schools and managers are more than likely to emphasize teaching and discourage teachers from other activities. This kind of school atmosphere and practice brings about a lack of parental involvement among classroom teachers. In this regard, raising awareness of parental involvement benefits among educators and preparing teachers for parental involvement can be among the most important factors in removing barriers to engaging parents effectively.

Improving parental involvement in teaching and learning is beneficial to families in that they support educational reforms, to children in that they improve their educational achievement, and to teachers in that they obtain a better reputation (Sosorbaram, 2010b). However, when parents lack the knowledge and skills necessary to foster the self-esteem and motivation that children need for successful learning, the children's overall educational achievement suffers. For these reasons, the MECSM believes it is essential to improve parental involvement in students' learning (MECSM, 2009). Parents alone cannot accomplish parental involvement; teachers must facilitate this process. Therefore, to help students improve in school achievement, primary education teachers need to be prepared to have good skills in facilitating collaborations between schools and parents.

Methodology

Parental involvement preparation in the primary school level pre-service teacher education at Dornod University (previously Dornod Institute)—one of the three state-owned primary (i.e., elementary) education teacher education institutions in Mongolia—was investigated in this study. A questionnaire survey, key informant interviews, and a document analysis were utilized to investigate primary education pre-service teacher education related to parental involvement. These instruments explored parental involvement content during pre-service teacher education and identified pre-service and classroom teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and practices in parental involvement as well as stakeholders' perceptions of primary education teacher preparation for parental involvement.

Participants

Dornod University seniors who completed courses to enter the teaching profession and who also completed 12 weeks of student teaching practice were invited to complete the questionnaire survey. In the case study school year, there were two classes with 32 primary education major seniors available, all of whom participated in this study. All 32 respondents were female, and the mean age was 22.7 years.

Most of the stakeholders interviewed were from two different primary schools in Choibalsan, the capital of Dornod province. Out of nine primary schools in Choibalsan, School A and School B were chosen to represent the stakeholders in this study because more than 71% of the classroom teachers at the two schools graduated from Dornod University. School A, with 630 students enrolled in the 2011–2012 school year, is located on the outskirts of the city; School B, with 740 students for the same school year, is located in the city center.

Eight different interview guides were utilized in the key informant interviews, in accordance with the eight different roles of the 17 stakeholders. The stakeholders included three Dornod University lecturers, a head of the University's training office, an official in charge of primary education at the Provincial Education Board, two primary school managers (similar to USA vice principals), two classroom teachers who supervise student teaching practice, two less experienced classroom teachers, four parents, and two pre-service teachers. All of the stakeholders were female, and their work experience ranged from 2–15 years. While the less experienced classroom teachers had three years of work experience, the other classroom teachers had 18 years of teaching with five to six years of supervising student teaching practice experiences. Most of the stakeholders, excluding parents, had graduated from Dornod University.

Results

Overall, participants considered parental involvement to be an important part of the pre-service teacher education because they believed students achieved more when teachers and parents collaborate. One participant stated, "At school, the relationship between a classroom teacher, student, and parent ought to be strong, and the classroom teacher is the one who has to establish this relationship." The results show, however, that students training to be teachers do not feel prepared to create this strong relationship.

Parental Involvement Practices in Primary Schools

Parental involvement is an area which teacher educators and classroom teachers fail to address. One prospective teacher concluded that "in pre-service teacher education the topic of parental involvement was left out, so we did not value it or put emphasis on it." Another lecturer mentioned, "Classroom teachers have the common experience that they put more time, effort, and emphasis on mathematics and the Mongolian language as opposed to working with parents."

Classroom teachers become more practiced in the area of parental involvement through their hands-on experiences. According to narrative responses, classroom teachers conduct the following activities involving parents: (1) conducting parent–teacher meetings, (2) asking for financial support from parents, (3) inviting parents to help provide a better learning environment in the classroom, (4) inviting parents to sit in class, (5) holding informal individual meetings, (6) conducting sports competitions and other contests for parents, (7) allowing parents to help prepare teaching materials, (8) holding formal individual meetings, and (9) asking parents to help organize Mongolian language or Mathematics Olympiads among students.

Findings from this study revealed that conducting parent–teacher meetings were the most common parental involvement activity among classroom teachers. At parent–teacher meetings, classroom teachers usually discussed students' progress, problems, grades, attendance, and attitudes toward learning, information about upcoming exams, class- and school-related news, and requests for fundraising. A pre-service teacher who observed a classroom teacher conducting a parent–teacher meeting reported, "At a parent–teacher meeting, a teacher passes on information and asks for fundraising, but there is no possibility to talk to parents individually."

Interestingly, all the classroom teachers who were invited to participate in this study previously graduated from the same pre-service teacher education at Dornod University. Most of them complained that no class sessions facilitating parental involvement were offered during their four years of pre-service teacher education.

However, the classroom teachers interviewed have been dealing with parental involvement through their hands-on experiences. One of the teachers mentioned that it is up to a classroom teacher to control whether parental involvement is positive or negative.

In fact, there were teachers who found it very difficult to improve parental involvement. Classroom teachers with less working experience tended to struggle more in dealing with parental involvement. A teacher with three years of teaching experience from School A on the outskirts of the city shared her experience in trying to communicate with her students' parents by using notes. However, she realized that a few parents were illiterate, so her idea would not work. Thus, she had to rely on parent–teacher meetings, expecting those parents' presence. Parent–teacher meetings, as the most common parental involvement activity, were the main way of communicating with parents. She concluded that parents' educational background was very likely to influence parental involvement level. In her class, there was no parent who had a higher education degree. In fact, two (4%) of the parents had only completed primary school. The rest completed lower and upper secondary schools, and vocational traning.

The reasons why parents do not regularly show up for parent–teacher meetings vary significantly. In some cases, employed parents cannot always attend meetings. Another reason that parents do not attend meetings may be the teacher's negative attitude toward children from poor families. Pre-service teachers shared their notions of this issue saying, "Teachers [just] ignore disadvantaged children," and "Teachers must avoid discriminating against children and families from deprived backgrounds." This kind of negative attitude of some classroom teachers may discourage parents from getting involved in school-based activities. The parent–teacher meeting attendance seemed to vary enormously depending on teachers' attitudes and skills in implementing parental involvement, as well as on the emphasis and attention schools put on engaging with parents.

Pre-service Teachers' Preparedness for Parental Involvement

Findings from this study suggest that pre-service teachers found parental involvement topics and activities in their courses, in their textbooks, and in their student teaching practice helpful. For current teacher candidates attending Dornod University, it is important to note that the parental involvement topic was recently included in the pre-service teacher program, showing that progress has been made in preparing teachers in this area. According to multiple responses of pre-service teachers, the topic was presented in the courses of pedagogy, psychology of child development, special needs education, and introduction to teaching. The courses were taken for one semester each. The respondents reported the courses included some coverage of topics such as how to conduct parent–teacher meetings (84.4%), how to plan and conduct a workshop for parents (62.5%), and how to design interactive homework for students to share with parents (59.4%). Many topics concerned conducting parent–teacher

meetings. Other topics were less prominent in the courses, such as how to organize and involve parents at school, the benefits of parental involvement, ways to involve parents helping their children in school and outside school, the barriers to parental involvement, and readings about working with parents. Additional materials such as research on school and parent partnership and techniques for improving two-way communication between home and school were hardly noticeable in the courses. There seems to be a lack of research results and reading materials on the topic of parental involvement in pre-service teachers' courses. There are two textbooks (Erdenetsetseg et al., 2010; Ichinkhorloo, 2010) mainly used by pre-service teachers in the course on pedagogy. Only two respondents (6.3%) mentioned that textbooks had prepared them for parental involvement. While the textbooks discuss what can or should be done to increase parental involvement of parent–teacher meetings, they do not include practical tasks or activities to help pre-service teachers gain the skills and confidence needed to put these ideas into practice. Now prospective teachers have some impression of, and experiences in, involving parents in children's learning, compared to most of the former Dornod University graduates who have been dealing with parental involvement only through their hands-on experiences after they were on the job.

However, most of the pre-service teachers mentioned that their student teaching practice was what best prepared them for engaging with parents. During their four years of teacher education, pre-service teachers had two different student teaching practices but only one of these—the pedagogical practice—required them to plan activities for parents and thus gain knowledge and skills through hands-on experiences by learning from their classroom teachers' practices.

Most pre-service teachers felt they were somewhat adequately prepared for parental involvement, though some felt unprepared. Pre-service teachers' self-assessment of their parental involvement knowledge and skills may have been shaped by their experiences during their student teaching practices. This finding is consistent with the result of an earlier study (Katz & Bauch, 1999), which found differences in perceptions on preparedness among pre-service teachers could result from differences in their student teaching experiences. Analysis of the interviews indicated that activities pre-service teachers conducted in classrooms and what they learned from classroom teachers regarding parental involvement during their student teaching practices varied depending on the experiences of the classroom teachers. One pre-service teacher stated, "For parental involvement, classroom teachers often [just] conduct parent-teacher meetings." It seems that classroom teachers play a key role in shaping pre-service teachers for parental involvement activities and attitudes. Opportunities to learn about parental involvement differed during student teaching practices based on skills, attitudes, and experiences of the classroom teachers and on the pre-service teacher's own initiative.

According to the participants, communication is important in enhancing parental involvement. However, most of the respondents mentioned that the pre-service teacher education does not teach how to communicate with adults/parents or understand the psychology of adults/parents, but only teaches how to communicate with children and about the psychology of children. As is stated in many studies

(Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004; Denessen, Bakker, Kloppenburg, & Kerkhof, 2009; Katz & Bauch, 1999; Mahmood, 2013; Uludag, 2008), pre-service teacher education should provide specific guidance, suggestions, and practices in communicating effectively with parents, along with providing theoretical knowledge and the real world of teaching.

Pre-service teachers surveyed thought the topic of parental involvement should be offered as a separate course in pre-service teacher education. They felt it was not a good idea to include the topic in other courses. These results are inconsistent with findings of an earlier researcher (Uludag, 2008) who found pre-service teachers preferred specific information on the topic of parental involvement rather than taking an extra separate course.

Discussion

The current primary education pre-service teacher education somewhat prepares prospective teachers for parental involvement by offering some relevant class sessions and student teaching practices at the Dornod University in Mongolia. However, not all pre-service teachers feel prepared for engaging effectively with parents. Current practices of parental involvement implementation in primary schools and parental involvement content coverage in teacher education both appear to be sub-optimal.

The possible reasons behind the little attention and emphasis on parental involvement practices and challenges faced by faculty and classroom teachers are discussed in the following subthemes of institutional and social factors: (1) the current parental involvement practices, (2) limited understanding of family diversity, (3) heavy workloads, (4) social changes and gender issues, (5) social status of the teaching profession, and (6) lack of awareness and attitudes of faculty.

The Current Parental Involvement Practices

Being aware of what parental involvement forms and activities are implemented in primary schools is important for preparing prospective teachers in this area. The current study identified three parental involvement dimensions, namely home-based, school-based, and parental resourcing, along with seven types of activities related to each dimension. The parental involvement dimensions were expanded from the work of Nguon (2012) and from other items identified during the literature review and fieldwork by the author (see Table 13.1).

Communication forms the basis of the three dimensions. Because findings of this study indicate that communication plays the key role in parental involvement, home–school communication appears to be vital to foster parental involvement. When parents and teachers communicate, understand each other, recognize their expectations for the child, and work together in order to meet goals for the child,

Table 13.1 Parental involvement dimensions

	Dimensions	Types	Items
Communication	Home-based	Child care	Providing learning environment; making sure of child's school attendance; discussing school lives; providing encouragement, etc.
		Learning	Monitoring homework; helping with homework, etc.
	School-based	Meetings	Attending parent–teacher meetings and formal individual meetings; attending parent council meetings; consulting about student performance, etc.
		School events	Sitting in class; taking part in sports competition and other contests by themselves or with children; attending pedagogical workshops, etc.
	Parental resourcing	Monetary contribution	Contributing cash for classroom cleaning, decoration, school graduation and school supplies; paying for private tutoring, etc.
		Labor contribution	Contributing to classroom decoration; helping with teaching materials preparation; organizing Olympiad and graduation day activities; conducting sports competition and other contests for students; giving a talk to class; cleaning classroom, etc.
		Material contribution	Contributing materials like mittens or baby animal coats to campaigns for herders in a *dzud* disaster; donating clothes and learning materials to students from vulnerable households, etc.

Source Adapted from three indexes of parental involvement (Nguon, 2012)

the child's learning outcomes are improved. In this regard, communication should encompass all parental involvement dimensions: home-based, school-based, and parental resourcing.

But despite the fact that parent–teacher meetings are more frequently observed in schools and are a common way for teachers and parents to communicate, there is a considerable disadvantage with this activity as currently practiced in Mongolian primary schools. Current parent–teacher meetings limit interaction and communication between parents and teachers. A general picture of this kind of meeting is that a

teacher talks and parents listen, and then they discuss some issues such as fundraising, classroom cleaning and decoration. Parents do not have a chance to have a private talk with a teacher to learn more about their children's academic performance and social development. Parent–teacher meetings could be more meaningful if a parent and a teacher met one on one.

One important and interesting parental involvement activity might be to hold Olympiad (academic competitions) practice sessions within a class—parents could contribute by marking papers and awarding prizes. In Mongolian school settings, much attention is paid to teaching and learning mathematics and the Mongolian language. Primary schools and managers encourage teachers to improve their students' performance in these two "main" subjects by winning at Olympiads and performing well on placement tests conducted by the Provincial Education Board. Olympiads have been popular among schools, teachers, students, and parents since the socialist era (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). Helping classroom teachers coach a whole class or individual students for Olympiads is also one of the tasks some pre-service teachers voluntarily conduct during their student teaching practice. From this kind of experience, pre-service teachers may learn from classroom teachers that Olympiads are very important in their future teaching career. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to focus solely on a few promising students by coaching them for Olympiads (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). Only those promising students and their parents benefit from this activity, but the remaining students and their parents remain outside the circle and are neglected.

Limited Understanding of Family Diversity

Teachers appear to treat children and parents differently regarding their background. Because teachers' backgrounds are often different from many parents, and because they do not have adequate education in family diversity and working with parents from different backgrounds, teachers may be more likely to neglect disadvantaged groups. By not adequately preparing teachers to collaborate with families from diverse backgrounds, negative parental involvement attitudes are perpetuated.

In addition to learning about family diversity, it is also important for teachers to learn more about the cultural changes families are experiencing. In recent years, parents in Mongolia have had to pay more attention to their business and family livelihood, which limits their time and effort in childrearing, child development, and involvement in their children's schooling (Badamkhand, 2011). Parents are historically more likely to believe that the "teacher's role is to teach and foster moral development" (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003), and this cultural belief restricts their involvement to just providing financial support.

Like rural Cambodian parents who often receive support from their extended family network (Nguon, 2012), it is common in Mongolia for family members and relatives to provide mutual help facilitating children's home-based and school-based activities in times of need. Interviews with parents revealed that two out of four

mothers interviewed did not permanently live with their children in the same household. While the mothers were self-employed in other areas, children lived with their grandparents. A mother reported, "Because I usually stay in a rural district, I cannot communicate with my child's teacher. Instead my mother [the child's grandmother] takes care of my child and communicates with the teacher."

In Mongolia, not only parents but also other family members are allowed to attend parent–teacher meetings. Classroom teachers, especially outside of city centers, need to recognize that "parents" are often actually grandparents, adult siblings, or other relatives.

The relatively new political system, market economy, and social relations which have been formed in Mongolia have changed people in different ways, affecting their traditions, ways of thinking, livelihood skills, and ways of understanding lives (Namjil, 2010). Understanding family structures, family traditions, and family background should be a first step before planning and carrying out family involvement activities.

Heavy Workloads

In addition to inadequate preparation of classroom teachers for parental involvement and diversity in family backgrounds, the heavy workloads of teachers contribute to a lack of parental involvement. Oftentimes, primary education teachers complain about their workload compared to other levels of school teachers. They say they do more additional tasks, such as marking papers more regularly, preparing more teaching and learning materials, coaching a whole class for Olympiads, working with slower learners after class. This seems to be one of the main reasons teachers cannot find enough time to improve parental involvement or to initiate effective communication with their students' families.

Teachers acknowledge the importance of parental involvement by recognizing that good parental involvement implementation helps prevent teachers from becoming overloaded. Teachers tend to believe that if parents get involved in their children's learning and development, it helps teachers to find the time and effort they need to put into additional tasks like working with slower learners, preparing teaching materials. However, there is a discrepancy between practice and belief; the practices of many teachers show they fear involving parents would cause extra work. Even though teachers acknowledge the importance of parental involvement and generally have positive beliefs about parental involvement, they seem to fail to put these beliefs into practice. There must be reasons why teachers dismiss parental involvement. The main reason seems to be that teachers lack positive attitudes toward and skills in initiating meaningful parent–teacher relationships and parental involvement. Oftentimes, schools do not encourage and support teachers in this area, but rather emphasize Olympiads, placement tests, and other academic competitions from which teachers benefit.

Teachers do not conduct effective strategies for initiating and maintaining parental involvement, even though they acknowledge that working effectively with parents can decrease their teaching loads. The fact that managers and schools do not usually push teachers to implement parental involvement might be one of the likely causes for this omission. Moreover, teachers are not motivated to engage with parents, and their attitudes toward their teaching profession tend to restrict them from putting more time and effort into parental involvement implementation.

Teachers in Mongolian schools were also found to convey a feeling of professional tragedy regarding their low pay (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). Low pay might be another factor discouraging teachers from developing more positive attitudes and a more powerful motivation toward the teaching profession. When teachers believe that they are already overloaded and underpaid, they tend to prefer completing regular tasks.

Social Changes and Gender Issues

Changes in basic social institutions, particularly those involving families, raise more challenges for schools and teachers. Increases in single-parent families and dual parental employment decrease the amount of time available for these parents to support their children's learning (Christenson, 2004). Earning a living and supporting their children's learning at the same time is a serious challenge for single parents, especially in disadvantaged areas.

These changes in social institutions contribute to a lack of parental involvement and are also related to gender issues in Mongolia. There are two gender issues related to parental involvement that are worth discussing: (1) the gender gap in education employment, and (2) the gender imbalance in households.

It is worth noting that all participants in this study were female. Women predominantly comprise the teaching staff at all levels of Mongolia's education system and of the tertiary education graduates in Mongolia. Some 94% of teaching staff in primary schools are female (ADB, 2005), and nearly two-thirds of higher education graduates are women (United Nations Development Programme, 2011). The gender imbalance of the school staff has been identified as the source of a reverse gender gap problem (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). An explanation for this is that there is a lack of male role models in the teaching staff.

Gender issues in the teaching staff of primary schools also play a role in reducing the morale of teachers and the quality of their professional skills. Female teachers themselves have little time for extra training because they also carry double work burdens (ADB, 2005). Many teachers are also mothers, and, as mothers, they often get involved in their own children's learning and carry the extra work burdens of balancing career and family duties. This suggests that finding extra time for activities such as initiating effective communication in order to improve parental involvement is limited because these teachers are already overloaded.

Another issue is an increase in female-headed households. Nationwide, 21.5% of households are headed by females (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2011), and these households continue to be vulnerable. Such women have more household tasks (ADB, 2005) which restrict their time for helping with their child's learning. Extra demands and efforts of earning a living typically prevent these women from getting as involved in their child's learning as women in two-parent households.

Social Status of the Teaching Profession

Public attitudes toward the teaching profession have changed in Mongolia. Erosion of social status and low reputation of the teaching profession negatively impact partnerships between teachers and parents (Dor, 2013). Since the dramatic changes of 1990, teachers' status has dropped, and public shaming and humiliation of teachers has been observed due to differences in institutional technology resources available in urban areas compared to the rest of Mongolia (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). Less promising general education graduates are those who now decide to be teachers. Low salary seems to be one of the main demotivating factors for the teaching profession. Since 1990, secondary school teachers nationwide have gone on strike a few times because of their low salaries (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006).

Less promising general education graduates joining the teaching profession, low salary of teachers, and insufficient teacher preparation seem to be major contributors to an overall decline in teachers' status in Mongolia. Teachers are not perceived as professionals by parents and are seen to be motivated only by salary and long school vacations (Fisher, 2009).

However, some programs and policies have been developed to address the decline in social status of the teaching profession. The MECSM (2014) issued "Policy on teacher education," which aimed to improve the quality of entrants to teacher education programs and the quality of teacher education programs. The policy also emphasized the importance of establishing a teaching credential system, and sustaining ongoing professional development for inservice teachers and teacher educators. Part of the policy was to develop a concrete system to evaluate teachers' performance. Another important issue discussed in the policy was an effort to encourage male students to join the teaching profession in order to balance gender equity in the education sector.

One recognized reason for a lower quality of education in the relatively recent drop in reputation and status of the teaching profession in Mongolia. One countermeasure is to publicize best practices of teachers who investigate every child's interests and uniqueness, and who nurture talents and the development of each individual. Such information can help improve the reputation and social status of teachers (Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia, 2012). However, nurturing the talents and development of each child has been a serious challenge for classroom teachers.

Lack of Awareness and Attitudes of Faculty

Survey respondents perceived that a separate course would be useful for pre-service teacher education in order to prepare prospective teachers for parental involvement. However, offering such a course is only the first step; offering a course does not mean that pre-service teachers will be fully prepared for parental involvement (Katz & Bauch, 1999). Whether the parental involvement topic is included in courses and sessions currently depends on who is teaching, what their interest and skills are, and if they want to spend time on this topic (Flanigan, 2007).

The new Curriculum Framework Document (Tsedenbal, 2009) creates a significant change in teacher preparation with a cluster of five courses called "Cluster courses for facilitating the teaching profession." These clusters include pedagogy, introduction to teaching, psychology of child development, special needs education, and student teaching. Despite the fact that the idea of the cluster courses was to ensure that prospective teachers were provided with the necessary skills and competences to educate primary students, lecturers design their syllabi independently and teach the courses according to their own interests. This suggests that interests and attitudes of faculty members could be an important factor in making meaningful changes in parental involvement. Positive attitudes of the faculty are therefore a key to positive changes (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

At the beginning stage, an awareness of the importance of the topic, a positive attitude toward the topic, a strong desire for implementation, and good teamwork related to existing courses may be more important than investing more time and effort in designing and offering a new course before everyone involved agrees it is needed. Until then, the five cluster courses can be modified to ensure that pre-service teachers will be equipped with the skills necessary to partner with parents to enhance students' learning.

Conclusions and Implication

This study surveyed current practices of parental involvement activities and the important components of preparing pre-service teachers to work with parents and found the importance of parental involvement in Mongolian schools is recognized. However, current pre-service teacher preparation for parental involvement was found to be lacking and to have too little emphasis.

Classroom teachers supervising student teachers currently play the most important role for shaping pre-service teachers in parental involvement. Different experiences among classroom teachers and schools have a large impact on pre-service teachers' professional judgments related to parental involvement. Too often, classroom teachers infrequently practice effective parental involvement because of their workload and attitudes toward engaging with parents.

Three parental involvement dimensions were identified: home-based, school-based, and parental resourcing. Each of these dimensions is implemented in this study's primary schools to a certain degree. However, although communication between home and school forms the basis for each dimension, communication between teacher and parent usually remains limited to such activities as parent–teacher meetings. Despite the fact that these parent–teacher meetings are a critical part of parental involvement in primary schools, classroom teachers struggle to get good attendance at the meetings. This study suggests the key issue is not how to improve parent-teacher meeting attendance, but how to prepare future teachers to conduct more meaningful parental involvement activities appropriate to students' grade levels and students' and parents' needs. Schools and teachers need to conduct different types of parental involvement activities to meet needs of diverse families (Zhang et al., 2011).

The pre-service teacher education program currently includes some parental involvement topics; however, the content is mainly focused on traditional and limited activities. The parental involvement content should move beyond the existing practices and allow class sessions to integrate lectures with activities such as role playing, videos, and case studies. In addition, prospective teachers may complete tasks like "designing family action plans, developing a philosophy of working with diverse families, designing an electronic [or paper] community resource directory, creating a workshop relating to family–school partnerships, developing a file of articles beneficial to families, and analyzing a variety of teaching cases related to family–school partnerships" (Patte, 2011, p. 156). These activities should provide pre-service teachers with better opportunities to gain good skills. In this way, prospective teachers can learn how theories taught in lectures can be applied in real-life primary school settings.

New teachers can become agents of change with classroom teachers because they are often more up to date with knowledge of the new curriculum and government requirements. The existing teaching population, with little formal preparation in parental involvement, seems ready to accept current information from pre-service teachers during student teaching practice. If prospective teachers are well prepared and have positive attitudes and positive experiences with parental involvement practices, they should be motivated and able to make improvements to parental involvement practices in their schools.

Good improvements can be made if such teacher education is accompanied by a change of emphasis and attitudes toward parental involvement. Survey results suggest that improving and changing these attitudes and emphases seems very possible given the reported realization of participants of the importance of parental involvement. New policies could be the next step to promote parental involvement for pre-service teacher preparation and to improve classroom teacher and school practices in parental involvement.

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Chapter 14
Korean Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Parent-Teacher Partnerships: The Effects of Motivation and Teaching Beliefs

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Abstract This chapter examined early childhood pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership, especially for the interaction effect between motivation and teaching beliefs on the parent-teacher partnership among Korean early childhood pre-service teachers. The participants for this study included 265 pre-service teachers in two different types of childhood teacher education programs (early childhood education and elementary education) in Seoul, Kyunggi, and Busan in Korea. The results from t-tests and ANOVA showed that pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership were differentiated by student status in the teacher education program with discrete differences depending on subfactors. Constructivist teaching beliefs were the most significant variable to predict the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership. Even though there were no statistically meaningful interaction effects between intrinsic motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs, two-way interaction plots implied interaction effects between these two predictors. Based on the results, we discussed the implications of the results in regard to curriculum development and educational policy for future endeavors to enhance teacher education quality and educational effectiveness.

Keywords Parent-teacher partnerships · Motivation · Teaching beliefs
Pre-service teacher

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Parent involvement has been studied for its effects on children's development and school learning in terms of academic success (e.g., Cox, 2005; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Sheldon, 2007). In contrast to its positive effects, Korean parents' concern for their children's education has been viewed negatively due to side effects such as excessive educational zeal, students' psychological instability, and expansion of private education in Korean society.

In contrast to general perspectives and attitudes toward parent involvement in children's education in Korea, many western countries, including the USA, encourage parent involvement through positive partnerships among parents, teachers, and organizations (Committee of Educational Reform, 2004; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Lim, 2011; Zaoura & Aubrey, 2011).

In fact, perceptions of parent-teacher partnerships and the methods and extent of parent involvement are various in terms of social perception and tradition (Boethel, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986; Desimone, 1999; Kim & Kim, 2004; OECD, 2006). Despite the differences in attitude, method, and extension, a considerable body of research encourages active involvement in that parent involvement in children's education has a positive influence on students' development and learning (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 1991; Lee, 2001; Miedel & Raynolds, 1999). As a result, national educational policies are designed to enhance parent-teacher partnership. For example, in the case of the USA, parent involvement in education has been encouraged for a long time, to the extent that parent involvement is listed as one of the goals of national education (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). In the case of Korea, parents' educational zeal, which is called "*chima-baram,*" is known to many researchers in other countries (Chang & Song, 2010; Yang & McMullen, 2003). The attitudes toward and direction of parent involvement in education in Korea should be reconceptualized systematically because parent involvement is often represented in terms of educational zeal and obsessive interest in early childhood education and exceptional education for gifted children. In particular, recent educational problems caused by school bullying or violence and private education (shadow education) should be improved through positive and proactive partnerships between parents and teachers. Parents should trust their teachers and play a critical role in building a healthy partnership during their children's early childhood and elementary school education; also, teachers should make every effort to encourage positive parent involvement. Teacher motivation and teaching beliefs are the major psychological factors that affect the extent to which teachers feel qualified to perform their roles professionally (Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Lee, 2009; Maxwell, McWilliam, Hemmer, Ault, & Schuster, 2001; Ramsey, 2000). These factors have an effect on perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership, which requires teachers' practical effort (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000; Woodruff & O'Brien, 2005; Yang & Cho, 2006). However, there has been a lack of studies examining how Korean pre-service teachers' attitudes toward and perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership are affected by what they learned in teacher education programs. Thus, the goal of this study was to examine the effect of motivation and teaching beliefs on the parent-teacher partnership among Korean early childhood pre-service teachers and how teachers' formation of parent-teacher relationships is

affected by changes in values. Although much existing research recognizes teachers' roles in the positive effects of the parent-teacher partnership and the formation of cooperative relationships, the effort is not sufficient to understand future teachers' perceptions of parent involvement and establish positive relationships between parents and teachers. In addition, although there are many studies showing the positive effect of teacher motivation and teaching beliefs on performance, nevertheless it is not revealed how these factors affect the parent-teacher partnership.

The Present Study

This study examined pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership according to teacher education program type, status in the program (grade), and the relationship between teacher motivation, teaching beliefs, and parent-teacher partnership, as perceived by pre-service teachers. Also, it examined how the interaction between teacher motivation and teaching beliefs affects parent-teacher partnerships and how to foster pre-service teachers' perception of this partnership. Specific aims were to investigate: (1) whether pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership differ by program location, teacher education program type, and pre-service teachers' status (grade) in their program; (2) to what extent teacher motivation and teaching beliefs impact pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership; (3) to what extent the interaction effect between motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs influences the predictability of both on the parent-teacher partnership among early childhood pre-service teachers. This study shows the results of the research on the basis of these research questions and discusses implications of the results for teacher education.

Literature Review

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

Teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership and their general perspectives on education are connected (Epstein, 1991; Lee, 2001). Positive and active behaviors and teaching strategies in relation to their teaching practices are directly and indirectly influenced by intrinsic teacher motivation (Yang & Cho, 2006). Also, constructivist teaching beliefs encourage positive communication and cooperation between parents and teachers, and teaching methods based on constructivism have an impact upon intrinsic motivation, teachers' role, and students' learning as well as students' sociality and academic performance (Patrick et al. 2000; Yang & Cho, 2006).

Hujala, Turjab, Gasparc, Veissond, and Waniganayake (2009) indicated "shared responsibilities in education," "parent involvement," "family-centered professionalism," and "parenting competence" as important factors in parent-teacher partnership formation. Considering their comprehensive definition, this study defines that the parent-teacher partnership is complementary cooperation between parents and teachers on students' overall learning, including field experience, school management, studying at home, and tutoring. While many studies used two terms of parent involvement and parent-teacher partnership without differentiation (e.g., Cooper, Chavira, & Dolores, 2005; Epstein, 1992; Hein, 2003; Knopf & Swick, 2007), this study distinguishes "parent-teacher partnership" from "parent involvement," which is one of the subfactors. The meaning of parent involvement is restricted to one subordinate area of complementary cooperation between parents and teachers in this study.

Teacher Motivationand Parent-Teacher Partnerships

Teacher motivation is an important factor influencing teachers' sense of values and successful work performance (Malmberg, 2006; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). According to many researchers, autonomous motivation is an important psychological variable affecting teachers' effective performance in their roles through enhancing pre-service teachers' partnerships with parents (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, & Legault, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Pre-service teachers decide to be teachers for several reasons. Deci and Ryan (2000) divided teacher motivation into extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is classified into external motivation, introjected motivation, and identified motivation. External motivation means to behave by extraneous impulsion, such as pecuniary reward or external pressure, and is regarded as the least autonomous form of motivation. Introjected motivation is behavior arising from internal pressure, such as a sense of duty or feelings of guilt or anxiety, and is more internalized than external motivation. However, introjected motivation is still not regarded as inducing the behavior associated with individual values, and pre-service teachers who decide to teach due to introjected motivation have a low level of autonomous motivation in their jobs and responsibilities. Identified motivation, as the third type of extrinsic motivation, is behavior based on values of self-judgment and autonomous and determined philosophy, unlike the other two types of extrinsic motivation with their basis in external values and criteria. In sum, while external motivation and introjected motivation are controlled types of motivations, identified motivation and intrinsic motivation are autonomous.

Sheldon and Elliot (1998) argued that autonomous motivations, such as intrinsic motivation and identified motivation, are positively related to desirable behavior and performance, compared to controlled motivations. According to them, those who have autonomous motivation have a high level of accomplishment and positive

relationships because they tend to fulfill their obligations and faithfully implement their tasks. The research on autonomous motivation and its effect, which was mainly conducted with in-service teachers as the participants, reported that autonomous teacher motivation has a positive influence on teaching methods and student achievement (Malmberg, 2006; Roth et al., 2007). Also, according to Malmberg's (2006) study focusing on pre-service teachers, those who with high intrinsic teacher motivation have a high level of goal orientation, compared to pre-service teachers with high extrinsic teacher motivation. In other words, pre-service teachers with high autonomous teacher motivation show more adaptive teaching strategies and effective teaching performance than other groups of pre-service teachers (Malmberg, 2006; Roth et al., 2007).

Intrinsic motivation plays a key role in leading students to take an interest in learning by improving teachers' performance in their role and related work (Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999; Wild, Enzle, Nix, & Deci, 1997). Therefore, we endorse the view that pre-service teachers with intrinsic motivation better understand the various positions in regard to learning, create an effective atmosphere for learning, and induce parent involvement, thus accomplishing their job. In other words, we assume that the more intrinsic motivation pre-service teachers possess, the higher the level of parent-teacher partnership they engage.

Teaching Beliefs, Teacher Education Programs, and the Parent-Teacher Partnership

The second psychological factor that has an influence on pre-service teachers' partnerships with parents is teaching beliefs. The constructivist perspective on education and development has gained prominence in early childhood education since 1987 (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Since then, constructivist teaching beliefs have often been contrasted to traditional teaching beliefs.

Constructivist teaching beliefs are well presented in the position statements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), in the USA where it is better known as developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Since the first DAP book was released, its factors of culture and play in education have been emphasized through reforms, and the third DAP reform is now used as an evaluation standard for American preschool and early childhood education programs. The educational foundation of DAP is also regarded as the educational and philosophical basis of teacher education. In Korea, NAEYC's DAP was introduced in the early 1990s and has since become a prominent instructional resource for the education of two- to four-year-old children, and is currently encouraged in the field of two- to eight-year-old education as well. On the contrary, several researchers, including Cannella (2002), have warned that a uniformed and standardized approach is dangerous without consideration of social and cultural characteristics of individuals or of social relationships, with a skeptical view about the actualization in classrooms

of DAP's child-centered educational idea (Ayers, 2002; Cannella, 2002; Grieshaber, 2008; MacNaughton, 2001).

Traditional teaching beliefs and constructivist teaching beliefs are contrasted in terms of the teacher's role, the position of students, and problem-solving strategies. While traditional teaching beliefs emphasize the authoritative role of a teacher, and focus on training, education by topic, and moral education, constructivist teaching beliefs stress the teacher's role as a helper, and the process and autonomy of learning (Bryant, Clifford, & Peisner, 1991). In addition, while traditional teaching beliefs follow a top-down way of instruction in a teacher-centered methodology, constructivist teaching beliefs choose a bottom-up approach that considers student-centered teaching methods and classroom cultural background. Across the nations in general, early childhood education, which places great importance on child-centered education, focuses on play (cultural product) and encourages constructivist teaching beliefs (DeVries, 2002). Also, the constructivist approach is not confined to preschool, but is encouraged in the field of education up to the third grade of elementary school, because it attaches importance to the family-cultural environment and parent involvement as well as students' learning and academic achievement (McMullen, 1999). Indeed, many studies have reported on the positive aspects of constructivist teaching and according to these, the constructivist approach is very effective for the development and learning not just of two- to eight-year-old students, but also those from third grade up to middle school (Guthrie et al., 2004; Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007; Kim, 2005). Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) asserted that teachers with constructivist teaching beliefs, which stress inquiry-based learning and the problem-centered approach, led more effective learning and enhanced academic achievement than the opposite group of teachers. According to this study, the inquiry-based model contributed to reducing the achievement gap and was an efficient method for African American students with low academic achievement. In addition, in research on the improvement of reading skills of third-grade students, constructivist teaching beliefs had a positive effect on cognitive strategies and learning motivation and were more effective than traditional teaching beliefs. These results of positive development and academic achievement are probably an affirmative by-product of school–family cooperation. Actually, much research has shown that frequent communication and cooperation between parents and teachers have a positive influence on sociality and general academic achievement (e.g., Jeynes, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Pre-service teachers obtain several theoretical advantages and approaches to constructivist teaching beliefs through teacher education programs. In addition, they experience changes of educational perspectives and teaching beliefs through learning various teaching methods and educational philosophies. Therefore, it is necessary to examine pre-service teachers' educational philosophies and perspectives according to their teacher education program. This study predicts that pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership will differ by educational program and academic year and that teacher motivation and teaching beliefs also will mediate in pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership.

To summarize the literature review, the constructivist teaching model, which emphasizes the teacher's role as a helper, student-centered education, and parent involvement as well as students' learning and academic achievement, is a critical factor that influences pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership.

Method

Sample

The participants for this study included 265 pre-service teachers enrolled in two different types of childhood teacher education programs (early childhood education ($n = 115$) and elementary education ($n = 150$) at four-year universities in Seoul, Kyunggi, and Busan in South Korea. This study conducted a convenience sampling method to collect data during the fall semester of 2011 and spring semester of 2012.

Among the subjects, 17.9% were freshmen, 18.3% were sophomores, 21.4% were juniors, and 42.4% were seniors in either early childhood education or elementary education in teacher education program. The average age of the participants was 21.43 years ($SD = 2.17$, range = 18–49 years); 88.7% female, 9.8% male, and 1.5% of undefined sex were included.

Procedure

To collect data, the potential participants were solicited to the survey via pre-service teacher and, with packets, which included an informational letter about the study, a consent form, a flier for the classroom visit, and the questionnaires. For the in-class survey, we contacted the instructors first and with their permissions, the research team visited and administered the survey using paper questionnaires after we explained our research and procedures.

Initially, we distributed approximately 280 survey questionnaires to pre-service teachers in early childhood and elementary education programs through arrangements with the instructors. Subject access, selection, and recruitment were facilitated mainly through collaboration with class instructors in the three teacher education programs. As a result, a total of 265 questionnaires were collected from the pre-service teachers and included in analyses. It took approximately 15–20 minutes for the pre-service teachers to complete the questionnaires.

Table 14.1 Parent-teacher partnership constructs, items, and internal consistency

Construct (a)	14 parent-teacher partnership constructs (a = .82)
Parent involvement (α = .75)	• Parents should collaborate with teachers and staff for class activities. • Parents should be active in school events. • Parents need to take a critical role in decision-making on school policy and administration.
Family-centered professionalism (α = .76)	• Teachers need to discuss with parents to promote child development and learning. • Teachers should enhance background knowledge and develop skills to support culturally diverse families for their child's learning and development. • One of the most important early childhood teachers' responsibilities was to provide parents with necessary advice and guidelines regarding child learning and development. • Teachers need to invite parents to be actively engaged in their children's learning process through participating in classroom learning activities.
Parenting competence (α = .71)	• It is important that parents manage their upbringing tasks well. • It is important that parents invest energy in the welfare of their family. • It is important that parents show their interests in their child's life in the school environment.
Perspectives on extra-curriculum (α = . 61)	• Parents should encourage their children to participate in after school programs. • Extra-curriculum including tutoring is helpful as supplemental educational resource to make teaching and learning effective. • Teachers should implement EBS programs into classroom teaching and guide students to use EBS programs to help them complete homework at home as well. • Parents need to provide their children with necessary learning materials and appropriate environment to maximize EBS programs.

Instrumentations

Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership

To gauge pre-service teachers' views, we used Hujala et al.'s (2009) survey questionnaire on the parent-teacher partnership. For the purpose of this study, we used four constructs, which included three constructs with 10 items each from the original survey questionnaires and one new additional construct developed for this study. These include (1) parent involvement, (2) family-centered professionalism, (3) parenting competence, and (4) perspectives on extracurricular activities. Cronbach's alpha values for these four subscales ranged from .61 through .76. Total parent-teacher partnership was .82, showing a high internal consistency among items (see Table 14.1). All items were rated by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We used the mean scores in subsequent analyses. To test construct validity of the measure used, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 8.8. The model fit indices indicated a good fit to the model ($X^2 = 132.66$ $df = 63, p < .001$, CFI = .96, NFI = .94, GFI = .93, RMSEA = .065, SRMR = .060) and validity for the sample (Kaplan, 2009; Kline, 2005).

Motivation to teach

In this study, we used the modified version of the Work Tasks Motivation Scale for Teachers (Fernet, Senécal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson, 2008) (WTMST) that Kim and

Cho (2014) used for pre-service teachers. The modified version for pre-service teachers' motivation to teach was to assess the extent to which pre-service teachers have autonomous motivation, ranging from intrinsic motivation, to identified motivation, introjected motivation, and external motivation.

Some sample question items were as follows: intrinsic motivation (e.g., "I find teaching interesting to do"), extrinsic motivation (e.g., "I feel like I am obligated to be a teacher"), identified motivation (e.g., "Teaching is important to me"), and introjected motivation ("If I don't become a teacher, I will feel bad"), and amotivation (e.g., "I don't know why I decided to be a teacher"). Each construct comprised three items, and all items were rated by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha value for amotivation was .44. Cronbach's alpha values for the other four constructs ranged from .61 to .89. We used the mean scores in subsequent analyses.

Constructivist beliefs

We used the Teacher Beliefs Survey (TBS) developed by Woolley, Benjamin, and Woolley (2004). TBS contains two constructs: constructivist teaching beliefs and traditional teaching beliefs. To gauge the degree of pre-service teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs, we only used 12 items in the subscale of teaching beliefs. Sample items for this subscale are as follows: "I believe that expanding students' ideas is an effective way to build my curriculum" (constructivist teaching beliefs), and "I base student grades primarily on homework, quizzes, and tests" (traditional teaching beliefs). All items were rated by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha value for constructivist teaching beliefs was .85 ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.77$). We used the mean scores in subsequent analyses.

Data Analysis

Using the SPSS.18 program, preliminary analyses were performed to check the internal consistency for each measurement, the normal distributions of variables, and violation of multicollinearity. We performed a confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the construct validity of the parent-teacher partnership measure using LISREL 8.8.

We conducted t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, and hierarchical multiple regression to examine our research questions. Specifically, a *t*-test and univariate analyses of variance were performed to examine group differences in pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership. To examine relations among key variables, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. We also performed several regression analyses to estimate Z scores and performed a simple slot test to examine the interaction effects of motivation and teaching beliefs on the parent-teacher partnership. Lastly, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the predictive utility of teacher motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs, as well as the interaction effect between them on pre-service teachers' per-

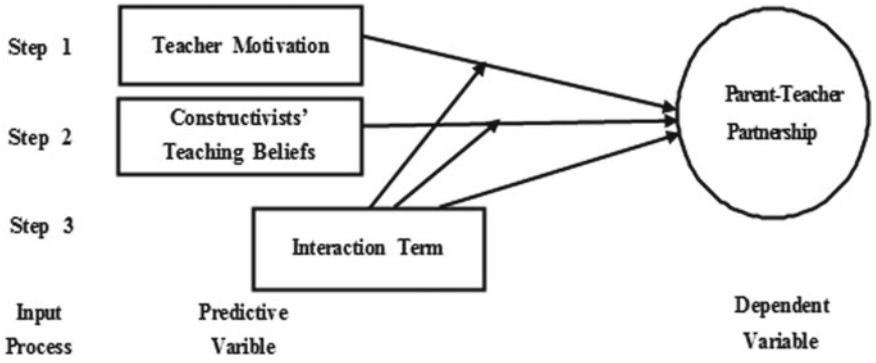

Fig. 14.1 Predictive analysis model of parent-teacher partnership perspective

ceptions of the parent-teacher partnership. Hierarchical multiple regression is useful to disclose the additional variance explained by independent variables when new sets of variables are entered (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The analysis model of this study is shown in Fig. 14.1.

The equation of the three-step multiple regression analysis model above is as follows:

Step 1 $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \varepsilon$
Step 2 $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{x}_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \varepsilon$
Step 3 $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \varepsilon$

To examine the interaction effects between motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs, we computed the interaction terms using Z scores prior to the final analysis. We then added the interaction terms into the regression model to predict the overall degree of pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership. Using simple slope tests, we examined the nature of the interaction effects between motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs on pre-service teachers' perspectives on the parent-teacher partnership.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

On a seven-point Likert scale, pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership, constructivist teaching beliefs, and overall motivation were rated above the midpoint of 3.5 ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 0.69$; $M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.77$; $M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.76$, respectively). Among the four subconstructs of teacher motivation, identified motivation ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.20$) showed the highest mean score ($M = 4.64$,

$SD = 1.41$), followed by intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.42$), extrinsic motivation ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.07$), and introjected motivation ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.18$). The average total motivation ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.76$) was rated 3.45 ($a = .744$).

Group Differences in the Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of the Parent-Teacher Partnership by Program and Program Status

First, we looked at mean differences by program (early childhood education vs. elementary education). The *t*-test results revealed that there were significant differences in "parent involvement" and "perspectives on extracurricular activities." More specifically, early childhood pre-service teachers ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.91$) valued parent involvement more than their counterparts in elementary education programs ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.08$). In group differences in perspectives on extracurricular activities, like in parent involvement, early childhood pre-service teachers ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.88$) valued parental support in extracurricular involvement more than their counterparts in elementary education programs ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.88$).

Second, we examined the group mean difference by program status (first year, second year, third year, and fourth year in the program). The results of ANOVAs showed that there were significant group mean differences in pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership ($F = 6.63$, $p < .001$). Specifically for the constructs, the results of ANOVAs showed that there were significant group mean differences in "parent involvement" ($F = 5.78$, $p < .001$), "family-centered professionalism" ($F = 3.48$, $p < .05$), and "parenting competence" ($F = .7.49$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, there were no significant group mean differences in "perspectives on extracurricular activities" ($F = .89$, $p > .05$). Post hoc tests were performed to see more detailed information about the differences among groups. The results of Scheffe's tests showed that differences in the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership were attributed to differences between (1) freshmen and seniors and (2) sophomores and seniors. The additional results of Scheffe's tests for the subscales are available in Table 14.2.

According to the ANOVAs, the higher level of perception of the importance of parent-teacher partnership among senior pre-service teachers was attributed to the significance in group differences in overall parent-teacher perspectives.

Correlations Among Motivation, Constructivist Teaching Beliefs, and Parent-Teacher Partnership

The results of Pearson's correlation analysis showed that the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership were positively correlated with con-

Table 14.2 Group differences in the pre-service Teachers' parent-teacher partnership by Program and program status

Factors	Program	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	
Parent involvement	ECE	114	4.54	.91	2.73**	
	EL	148	4.20	1.08		
Family-centered professionalism	ECE	114	5.38	.94	1.18	
	EL	147	5.23	.93		
Parenting competence	ECE	114	5.40	1.01	-1.49	
	EL	147	5.58	.95		
Perspectives on extra-curriculum	ECE	114	4.30	.88	2.09*	
	EL	148	4.07	.88		
Parent-teacher partnership	ECE	114	4.90	.70	1.74	
	EL	148	4.73	.66		
Factors	Status	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	Ad hoc test
Parent involvement	Freshmen	47	3.96	1.00	*5.78***	*a<d**
	Sophomore	46	4.04	.94		*b<d**
	Junior	55	4.50	1.06		
	Senior	111	4.55	.99		
Family-centered professionalism	Freshmen	47	5.15	.83	*3.48**	*b<d**
	Sophomore	46	5.00	1.02		
	Junior	55	5.32	1.06		
	Senior	111	5.47	.91		
Parenting competence	Freshmen	46	5.28	.91	*7.49****	*a<d**
	Sophomore	46	5.06	1.03		*b<d****
	Junior	55	5.52	1.06		
	Senior	111	5.78	.82		
Perspectives on extra-curriculum	Freshmen	46	4.03	.84	.89	--
	Sophomore	46	4.10	.68		
	Junior	55	4.30	1.05		
	Senior	111	4.16	.86		
Parent-teacher partnership	Freshmen	46	4.58	.64	*6.63****	*a<d**
	Sophomore	46	4.55	.69		*b<d***
	Junior	55	4.90	.78		
	Senior	111	4.97	.60		

Note. Post hoc test = Scheffe test

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, * $p < .05$

structivist teaching beliefs ($r = .55$, $p < .01$) (see Table 14.3). In turn, the more positive the overall constructivist teaching beliefs, the greater the perception that pre-service teachers had about the importance of the parent-teacher partnership. On the other hand, pre-service teachers' perception of the parent-teacher partnership showed no correlation with their overall motivation. However, when we looked at the correlations between the parent-teacher partnership and subscales in motivation, the results showed that the pre-service teachers' perception of the parent-teacher partnership was positively related to intrinsic motivation, identified motivation, and extrinsic motivation. Among them, identified motivation was more significantly correlated with the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership than with the other two motivations.

Table 14.3 Correlations among motivation, constructivist teaching beliefs, and parent-teacher partnership

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Intrinsic motivation	1	.63**	.55**	.23**	-.34**	.55**	.30**	.083	.07	.19**	.20**	-.01	.14*
2. Identified motivation		1	.56**	.58**	-.23**	.75**	.29**	.25**	.07	.13*	.12*	.18**	.17**
3. Extrinsic motivation			1	.55**	.01	.81**	.17**	.21**	.06	.10	.06	.09	.12*
4. Introjected motivation				1	.05	.76**	.04	.16*	.02	-.10	-.08	.13*	.00
5. Amotivation					1	26**	-.14*	.12*	.08	-18**	-.20**	.08*	-.13*
6. Teacher motivation						1	.19**	.29**	.53**	.02	.02	.17**	.08
7. Constructivist Beliefs							1	.52**	.49**	.53**	.54**	.26**	.55**
8. Traditional Beliefs								1	.15*	.27**	.19*	.35**	.47**
9. Parent Involvement									1	.49**	.46**	.21**	.73**
10. Family-centered professionalism										1	.65**	.26**	.84**
11. Parenting competence											1	.15*	.76**
12. Perspectives on extra-curriculum												1	.59*
13. Parent-teacher partnership													1
N	265	265	265	265	265	265	261	261	262	261	261	261	262
M	4.64	3.74	3.65	2.62	2.70	3.45	5.04	4.05	4.35	5.30	5.50	4.17	4.81
SD	1.41	1.20	1.07	1.18	1.38	.76	.77	.61	1.02	.92	.98	.89	.69

**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$. (2-tailed).

Predictor of Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Parent-Teacher Partnerships

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to examine how pre-service teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs and motivation for teaching (e.g., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) predict their perception of the parent-teacher partnership. To reduce multicollinearity problems, predictor variables were standardized (Aiken & West, 1991), and then interaction terms were created by multiplying the standardized predictor variables.

Pre-service teachers' motivation (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) was entered as a covariate in the first step of the regression model and pre-service teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs were entered as the main effect predictor variable in the second step of the model, followed by interaction terms between pre-service teachers' motivations (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) in the third step.

Before estimating an interaction term, we standardized the two predictor variables and multiplied them (Aiken & West, 1991). First, we examined the predictability of the subconstructs in motivation on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership and then the interaction effect between constructivist teaching beliefs and intrinsic motivation on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership.

The overall regression model was significant ($F = 24.09, p < .001, R^2 = .323$), with a *significant increase in* R^2 in each step. The results showed that pre-service teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs ($\beta = .483, t = 7.59, p < .001$) and traditional teaching beliefs ($\beta = .124, t = 1.98, p < .05$) were positively related to their perception of the parent-teacher partnership (see Table 14.4).

As seen in Table 14.4, at Step 1, we entered two types of motivations (intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation). Pre-service teachers' motivation explained 2.6% of variations in their perception of the parent-teacher partnership ($F = 3.36$, $p < .05$). Entry of constructivist teaching beliefs ($\beta = .48$, $t = 7.61$, $p < .001$) and traditional teaching beliefs ($\beta = .133$, $t = 2.13$, $p < .05$) to the model resulted in a significant increase in R^2 ($F = 29.77$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .319$) by 29.4% at Step 2.

At the final step, the model was further improved by 0.3% in R^2 when the interaction effects between constructivist teaching beliefs and motivation predictors (intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation) were added to the model. The interaction term (as predictor) between constructivist teaching beliefs (CB) and intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -.061$, $t = -1.117$, $p > .05$) was not statistically significant. Although the interaction effects were not statistically significant, we detected changes in the effects of main predictors (see Table 14.4).

In order to better understand the nature of the two-way interaction, we conducted simple slope tests and graphed regression lines at a low (1 *SD* above the mean) and a high (1 *SD* below the mean) level of pre-service teachers' positive perception of the parent-teacher partnership (see Fig. 14.2), following the guidelines proposed by Aiken and West (1991). As shown in Fig. 14.2, the simple slope tests revealed that standardized regression coefficients for pre-service teachers' intrinsic motivation were different from zero for those who scored low on their constructivist teaching

Table 14.4 Predictability of motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs on pre-service teachers' perception on parent-teacher partnership

Step/ DV	ß	*t*	*VIF*	*F*	$R^2(\Delta)$
1				3.36*	.026
Intrinsic motivation (IM)	.133	1.80	1.434		
Extrinsic motivation (EM)	.042	.57	1.434		
2				29.77***	.319
Intrinsic motivation	.005	.005	1.519		(.294)
Extrinsic motivation	-.002	-.029	1.434		
Constructivist teaching beliefs (CT)	.484	7.61***	1.094		
Traditional teaching beliefs (TT)	.133	2.13*			
3				24.09***	.323
Intrinsic motivation	.020	.31	1.650		(.003)
Extrinsic motivation	.001	.004	1.518		
Constructivist teaching beliefs	.483	7.59***	1.523		
Traditional teaching Beliefs	.124	1.98*	1.471		
IM × CT	-.059	-1.12	1.276		

Note. VIF = variance inflation factor; $R^2(\Delta)$ = changes in R^2

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$

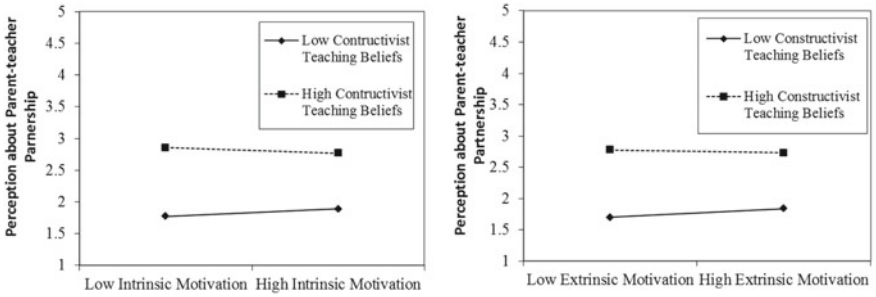

Fig. 14.2 Interaction effect between motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs on pre-service teachers' parent-teacher partnership

beliefs, while they were not different from zero for the pre-service teachers who scored high on their constructivist teaching beliefs. The result suggested that while not significant, pre-service teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs had an influence on their perception of the parent-teacher partnership when pre-service teachers had a low level of constructivist teaching beliefs, with high level of intrinsic motivation leading to a higher level of parent-teacher partnership. Low intrinsic motivation resulted in a lower perception of parent-teacher partnership when it was accompanied by a low level of constructivist teaching beliefs. Although not included in the model, we checked the effects between constructivist teaching beliefs and extrinsic motivation. The results showed that, regardless of the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs seem to have positive interactional effects on the parent-teacher partnership.

Discussion

This study examined pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership according to teacher education program type and years spent in the program (grade) and the relationship between teacher motivation, teaching beliefs, and the parent-teacher partnership, as perceived by pre-service teachers. We also examined how the interaction between teacher motivation and teaching beliefs affects the parent-teacher partnership and how to foster pre-service teachers' perception of this partnership. As a result, pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership were differentiated by their education program and program status, and the differences were various depending on subfactors. Constructivist teaching beliefs were the most significant variable to predict pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership, and intrinsic teacher motivation showed more meaningful predictive effect than extrinsic teacher motivation. Even though there were no statistically meaningful interaction effects between intrinsic motivation and constructivist teaching beliefs, the result of hierarchical regression equation showed that

the predictive effects of the predictors were changed according to steps. Based on the results, we will discuss here effective teacher education and future research.

First, while the overall parent-teacher partnership was not differentiated by program type, parent involvement and perspectives on extracurricular activities were differed by program type. Particularly, pre-service teachers of early childhood education participating in this study considered parent involvement and perspectives on extracurricular activities more important than pre-service teachers of elementary education did. The result that there was no significant difference between pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership by program type is regarded as considerably positive. However, it should be substantiated by extensive study due to the complex structure of teacher education in early childhood (birth through age 8) in Korea. Korean early childhood teacher education comprises educating (1) teachers of students from birth through preschool, (2) teachers of preschool to kindergarten students, and (3) teachers of primary students (first graders to third graders). These three fields are governed by two different teaching certificate tracks and followed by different educational policies.

The result of differences by pre-service teachers' status in the program showed that pre-service teachers participating in this study gradually perceived the significance of the parent-teacher partnership in general as their teacher education programs proceeded. The mean of sophomores was slightly lower than that of freshmen but it did not affect the result, while senior pre-service teachers perceived the importance of the parent-teacher partnership more than freshmen did. This implies that as academic year goes up, pre-service teachers can expand their knowledge and visualize theory through field experience and teaching practice because developmental theories based on constructivism and knowledge of educational theories learned from teacher education programs emphasize the importance of the parent-teacher partnership (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Woodruff & O'Brien, 2005). It is conceivable that theoretical knowledge is meaningful when pre-service teachers implement theories into practice through their practicum and student teaching. Therefore, opportunities of developing cooperative plans between parents and teachers and effective programs to improve students' learning through relationships with parents should be provided through courses and practice during teacher education program. It is important to provide pre-service teachers with ample opportunities to learn more about the implementation of theories into practices through well-trained supervisors and cooperating teachers or by working with veteran professional teachers who can teach them how to construct positive partnerships with parents (Lee, Choi, & Jang, 2009). That is, teacher education programs should stress the importance of enhancing partnerships among stakeholders even during teacher education, and give pre-service teachers chances to effectively learn through teaching practice and seminars associated with local society (Jung et al., 2004; Kim & Kim, 2004).

Second, the result of correlation analysis showed that constructivist teaching beliefs had a higher positive correlation than teacher motivation. As we mentioned earlier, it may be an effect of constructivism that actively encourages parent-teacher partnerships and parent involvement in the education of children. It was the absence (or lack) of motivation that was the only variable of negative correlation with the

parent-teacher partnership. Thus, teacher education programs should endow pre-service teachers with internal and external motivation in order for them to have a calling for teaching and provide quality education to improve the parent-teacher partnership.

Third, as the result of hierarchical multiple regression in order to predict pre-service teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership shows, the effect of constructivist teaching beliefs was the most significant, and in spite of no statistical significance, there was a mediation effect of constructivist teaching beliefs between teacher motivation and interaction effect. This result is consistent with the previous research that pre-service teachers' motivation is not a stationary psychological state but changes due to time and specific occasion (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sinclair, 2008). Thus, by developing various educational theories and practices including constructivist teaching beliefs and programs to intensify autonomous teacher motivation, pre-service teachers should have opportunity to feel their conviction and passion for teaching and for developing positive parent-teacher relationships. In addition, the interaction effect showed that among pre-service teachers with a low degree of constructivist teaching belief, pre-service teacher with a low degree of intrinsic motivation did not consider the parent-teacher partnership seriously while pre-service teachers with a high degree of intrinsic motivation attached greater importance to the parent-teacher partnership. However, there was no significant interaction effect with intrinsic motivation in prediction of the parent-teacher partnership among pre-service teachers with a high degree of constructivist teaching belief. The interaction effect with extrinsic motivation was the same. These results are considerably encouraging although they were not statistically significant. Most pre-service teachers learn about constructivism and its educational insights when they study in a teacher education program. Although pre-service teachers' motivation to be a teacher can differ by person (Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Ramsey, 2000), the results imply that their perceptions of the parent-teacher partnership can be changed through the effect of theoretical knowledge (constructivist theory and practice) learned in teacher education programs. Nevertheless, the generalization of the mediation role of constructivist teaching beliefs seems to be possible only after further studies with the participation of many more pre-service teachers.

Based upon these results, suggestions for future studies and teacher education programs are as follows. First, future research studies should examine pre-service teachers' perception of the parent-teacher partnership by considering the influences of sociocultural factors. These studies should provide a direction for all three teacher education certificate programs in Korea by enabling equal benefits and opportunities for future teachers and enhancing the quality of teachers through tailoring effective and sound teacher education policies which fit local, social, and cultural needs. In order to do so, future research studies should utilize more advanced social research methods and data collection procedures including all stakeholders in early childhood education. These studies should also be supported so that their results can formulate a practical direction for early childhood teacher education policy in Korea.

Second, subsequent research should provide pre-service teachers with extensive opportunities to work with parents, teachers, and school staff, and this can be done

through action research and analyzing pre-service teachers in preschool, early childhood, and elementary education from birth through age 8. These efforts will provide teaching practice opportunities for pre-service teachers to recognize the significance of the parent-teacher partnership.

Third, some people actively learn new knowledge and internalize it, and others do not. The result of this study showed that the gap of meaningful educational perceptions could be narrowed through teacher education program, regardless of teacher motivation. Nevertheless, there may be a wide level of differences in teacher motivations among the three different levels of pre-service teachers in early childhood certificate programs. By comparing teacher education programs per each level (i.e., birth through age 5, pre-K, pre-age 8, etc.) in other countries, it can be possible to find effective ways to enhance the extant teacher education programs for the different age groups of children in Korea. Thus, subsequent research should conduct both in-depth analysis of classified teacher motivation among Korean early childhood pre-service teachers and cross-cultural studies pertaining to global teacher motivations among early childhood pre-service teachers and their perception of parent-teacher partnerships.

Lastly, future studies should be a multilateral approach to suggest conditions and direction for the parent-teacher partnership, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. On the basis of the result of this approach, teacher education program should be both a field of education for pre-service teachers to participate in, through which they effectively internalize constructivist teaching beliefs, and an opportunity for them to learn their role as teachers, playing a proactive role in the parent-teacher partnership, through systematic programs and professional field experiences.

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Chapter 15
Immigrant and Minority Parent Engagement: A Participatory Approach in Pre-service Teacher Education Programme

Hyunjung Shin and Kaitlyn Robertson

Abstract This chapter discusses how to support pre-service teachers to better engage immigrant and minority parents using a critical pedagogical approach in teacher education. We present a university course project conducted by a group of pre-service teachers in Saskatoon, Canada, who explored a participatory approach in English as an additional language (EAL) education to support EAL students and their families. Through a critical reflection on our experience working with a group of Korean mothers in Saskatoon, including Kaitlyn's photovoice and reflective writing assignments submitted for the course, we provide suggestions regarding how to cultivate the development and practice of critical and culturally responsive pedagogies in pre-service teachers to ensure parental engagement is an integral part of their educational practice.

Keywords Pre-service teachers · EAL parents · Parental engagement · Critical pedagogy · Participatory approach

Introduction

Despite the increasing number of immigrant and English as an additional language (EAL) students in almost every classroom in Canada, second language (L2) education research has traditionally focused on schools in large metropolitan settings such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal where immigrant and EAL learners constitute a critical mass. Located in a smaller city on the prairies which is somewhat isolated, relatively lacking in diversity, and where most of the teacher candidates (TCs) are

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predominantly White, teacher education programmes in Saskatoon present some unique characteristics and challenges regarding the preparation of TCs to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms: (1) many of our TCs are from adjacent rural areas and find themselves for the first time in their life having to deal with immigrant or minority students and families who do not come from either English or French background; (2) while there is an increasing discussion among the educators on the urgent need to accommodate linguistically and culturally diverse students in urban classrooms, pedagogical practices in small suburban/rural areas have yet caught up to this realization. In Saskatchewan, for example, there were 13,831 students reported by school divisions as requiring EAL supports as of 30 September 2015 (Seema Saroj, personal communication, 14 July 2016). Despite the increasing number in EAL students, EAL teacher preparation continues to exist on the margin as an optional course. Furthermore, especially in the northern regions of Saskatchewan, only a handful of schools in the province have an on-site EAL teacher, and therefore the majority of the mainstream teachers are left on their own to seek out the much needed pedagogical assistance and resources to support EAL students, including a high number of Canadian-born Aboriginal EAL learners (Shin, 2014).

This chapter discusses how to support pre-service teachers in Saskatoon to better engage immigrant or minority parents. We present a university course project conducted by a group of pre-service teachers who explored a participatory approach in EAL education to support EAL students and their families. Participatory approaches to curriculum development focus on issues of importance to specific groups of students at a particular time (Auerbach, 1992) and thereby allow learners to gain a deeper level of learning by taking full control and ownership of their own learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). In a participatory EAL classroom, developing communicative competence, or ability to use appropriate linguistic forms in the right context is emphasized; creating contexts for authentic and meaningful communicative activity is the teacher's task (Auerbach, 1992). Therefore, one challenge of participatory approach is that the teacher must spend more time on initial lesson planning in order to interact in a flexible manner with students as a facilitator. In addition, when students are not accustomed to this type of instruction, teachers must use instructional time to teach what it means to raise critical questions and have meaningful conversation with peers (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Hyunjung, the first author, was the university instructor for the course, originally from South Korea, and Kaitlyn, the second author, was a White, Canadian-born teacher candidate who participated in the project for the course assignment. Through a critical reflection on our experience working with a group of Korean mothers for the project, we explore how a critical L2 teacher education (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Cummins & Early, 2011; Freire, 1998, 2000; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Lau, 2016; Shin & Crookes, 2005) may better prepare pre-service teachers in fostering parent engagement as an integral part of their practice in order for them to authentically develop and practise linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogies.

We first provide a brief discussion on critical pedagogy and participatory approach as theoretical backdrop, followed by a description of the context and the course project. We then present our reflection on the project using Kaitlyn's photovoice and reflective writing assignments submitted for the course. We conclude by offering suggestions for a critical dialogue and possibilities in teacher education for a more nuanced approach to EAL parent engagement which is critical to facilitate EAL student success.

Pre-service Teachers and EAL Parents

Although a significant amount of educational research has discussed the importance of strong partnership between parents and teachers/schools, studies on how to help pre-service teachers to acquire necessary skills to build such partnership have been scarce (Maynes, Curwen, & Sharpe, 2012; Ravn, 2003). Research shows the positive effects of integrating instruction on parent involvement into pre-service teacher education programmes in helping teacher candidates to be better prepared and develop positive opinions towards the issue (Uludag, 2008). Yet, the discussion is predominantly based on dominant White ideologies; particularly lacking is how to help pre-service teachers to better interact with immigrant and minority families (Guo, 2012). Graue and Brown (2003), for example, illustrate how pre-service teachers often enter their internships with their White centric assumption on the way families may support teachers, which hinders their opportunities for meaningful collaboration with families from a diverse background. In her discussion of pre-service teachers' experiences of learning from immigrant parents, Guo (2012) demonstrates how curricular decisions are still made based on dominant White, western ideologies within schools, while immigrant families' first languages and their requests regarding religious needs or cultural comfortability are often disregarded.

Strong partnership between parents and teachers also contributes to higher academic achievement of students as well as more positive attitudes towards school in both students and parents (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). In their description of key factors in culturally responsive teaching, Villegas and Lucas (2002) highlight the importance of having positive views of students from diverse backgrounds and learning about their lives to design effective instruction. To help pre-service teachers to better incorporate and value linguistic and cultural diversity within a classroom, Guo (2012) suggests some effective strategies such as valuing immigrant parent knowledge, utilizing first language in class and using immigrant knowledge as resources, rather than a deficit.

Recognizing that the majority of pre-service teachers in our own institution also enter their classrooms with limited interaction with EAL students during their internship or practice teaching, we explore how to better prepare teacher candidates to develop skills to make a meaningful connection with EAL parents so the knowledge EAL parents possess can be used in their classrooms to benefit all students. Noting that providing White pre-service teachers with the opportunity to experience and

learn from minority families is particularly important for linguistically and culturally responsive teaching (Graue & Brown, 2003), we hope to highlight participatory approaches to EAL teaching as a way to help teacher candidates to combine both teacher knowledge and parent knowledge in supporting the teaching and learning of their students.

Critical Pedagogy, Participatory Approach and EAL Parent Engagement

We view L2 learning and teaching as socially situated practice which is inherently embedded within the broader sociopolitical relations between language, culture and identity (Cummins, 2000, 2001; Norton, 2000; Street, 1995). In our discussion on a more nuanced approach to immigrant and minority parent engagement for social equity, we thus draw from critical pedagogical theories (Auerbach, 1995; Crawford-Lange, 1981; Cummins & Early, 2011; Freire, 1998; Norton & Toohey, 2004). In contrast to traditional or banking models of education which focuses on mere transmission of knowledge from teachers to students, in a critical pedagogical classroom, the teacher and the students collaboratively construct knowledge through a reflective dialogue about the life experiences of the students for social transformation (Shin & Crookes, 2005; Shor, 1996; Wink, 2010). We explore participatory approach as a critical L2 teaching strategy to incorporate topics that derive from students' daily lives into language learning so they can take an action to solve social problems (Auerbach, 1995; Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Critical research in parent engagement challenges the dominant discourse which constructs immigrant or minority parents as deficit, the problematic "Others", in relation to their linguistic and cultural incompetence in communicating with schools (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Gibson, 2000), and highlights instead the "*funds of knowledge*" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992) the minority parents bring to school to enrich the school environments (Guo 2012; Khan, 2015; Pushor & The Parent Engagement Collaborative II, 2015). Yet, research on the importance of meaningful incorporation of minority parents' knowledge on their language, culture, religion and educational system into the core activities in mainstream schools is scarce, especially for EAL parent engagement (but see, e.g. Guo, 2006). The key decision-making in schools continues to rest with the educators (Pushor, 2001). We examine participatory approach as a practical and pedagogical tool to recognize the value of immigrant and minority *parent knowledge*, which is historically accumulated, out of their formal and informal experiences, and culturally developed bodies of knowledge (Pushor & The Parent Engagement Collaborative II, 2015) and to build a greater awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity among pre-service teachers in preparing them to work with EAL students and their families.

In order to truly access parent knowledge, teachers first need training to *engage* with parents rather than to merely *involve* them on school landscape. Parent involvement means doing things *to* parents while parent engagement implies doing things *with* parents (Ferlazzo, 2011). Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) highlight the significance of parent engagement, rather than parent involvement, in repositioning the educators as "guests", instead of "experts" on the school landscape, so they can ask what they can learn from parents about teaching and learning of their children. To this end, we attend to L2 teacher education research highlighting language-focused preparation for teachers by using language biographies to explore their emotionality of language use and experiences, to enhance teachers' sociolinguistic and intercultural consciousness, and to facilitate their attitudinal change towards linguistic and cultural diversity (Busch, Jardine, & Tjoutuku, 2006; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Nieto, 2000). For example, student teachers' emotional engagement with their autobiographical narratives of language experiences has shown to help them to question societal power relations in language education, and to change their perceptions over issues regarding language and culture, which may ultimately lead to greater social transformation (Benesch, 2012; Lau, 2016; Motha & Lin, 2014). In the next section, we further elaborate on the context and process of our project.

The Context: EAL Inquiry Course and a Participatory Approach to EAL Parent Engagement

The course activity we report here was conducted for an EAL inquiry course entitled, *Inquiry Project and Community Learning Field Experience: EAL and second language teaching*, at the University of Saskatchewan during the winter term in 2015. The purpose of the course was to facilitate experiential learning opportunities for pre-service teachers through which they enhance their knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of EAL education. The course was designed to prepare pre-service teachers for more inclusive education for EAL students in their future classrooms in response to the rapidly increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in the province. Since many pre-service and in-service teachers in Saskatchewan do not have an extensive experience of interacting with immigrant or EAL students and their families before they meet such students in their classrooms, Hyunjung chose inquiry as a mode of teaching for this course so students reflect on how they get to know what they know, rather than simply focus on transmission of knowledge from the instructor to the students.

One of the course assignments was for TCs to explore the EAL community in Saskatchewan through a community or school engagement project. Options to do so included: (1) working with partners Hyunjung was able to arrange such as Saskatoon Open Door Society, University language centre and Korean Women's Association; or (2) working in their own professional context such as K-12 classrooms where they have been working with a teacher, community college classrooms or volunteer

organizations. For this project, TCs spent 30 h to gain relevant experiences to develop their own responses to the inquiry question they formulated in consultations with Hyunjung.

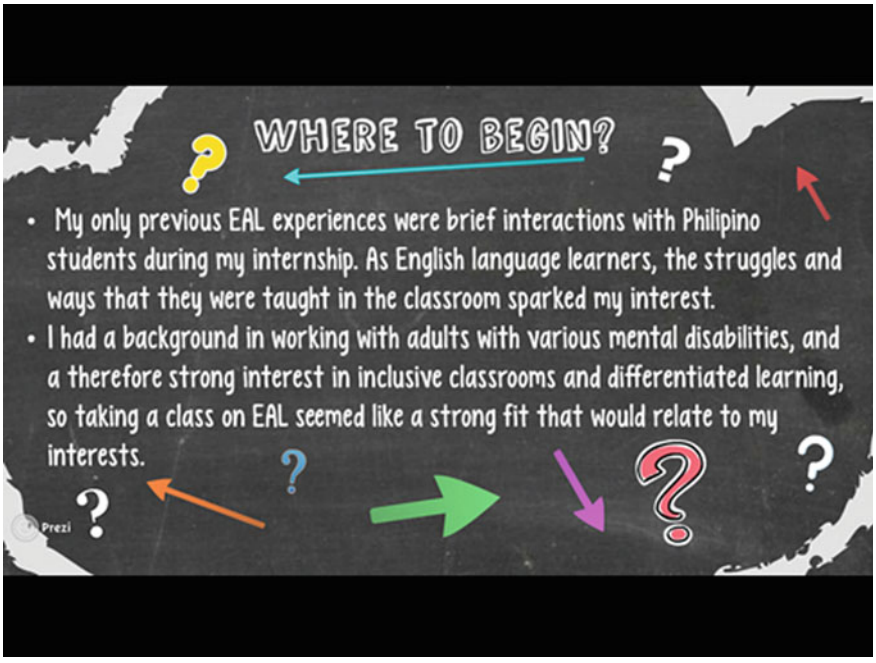
Among the 23 TCs who took the course, two TCs, including Kaitlyn, initially chose to work with Korean-Canadian Women's association in Saskatoon as an EAL parent group. One more student transferred to this group later due to various challenges with their initial inquiry project. Most of the TCs were in their final year in the teacher education programme upon completion of their internship. Kaitlyn was also in her second (or final) year in the College of Education, her fifth year of university overall with her prior education in Kinesiology. She had worked for several summers with adults with various mental disabilities, assisting them with daily living and employment, so had an interest in adult education. Before taking the course, Kaitlyn had just completed her internship in a middle school with little cultural diversity and interactions with beginner level EAL students to help their vocabulary and grammar development and reading comprehension. Kaitlyn was attracted to the idea of having direct interaction with the EAL parents and learning about the gaps within school's EAL learning from their point of view, which was why she chose to join this group for her inquiry project. She believed that this project would provide her with a unique experience. As Kaitlyn was one of the two TCs who joined the group from the beginning of the project and had a genuine interest and passion for the topic of participatory approach and EAL parent education, Hyunjung chose to write this reflection with her.

This 30-h community project assignment was combined with another group assignment in which TCs spent 20 h in groups critically investigating the relevant literature to develop scholarly analysis of the inquiry questions they pursued, and subsequently, developed a 50-min inquiry group seminar presentation resulting from their research. Hyunjung provided the class with a list of potential readings and resources on various aspects of EAL education to guide their group inquiry, as well as examples of possible cultural activities TCs may consider for their EAL community exploration assignment. Kaitlyn's groups chose participatory approach to EAL education for their inquiry seminar topic. While reading the chapter on participatory teaching in Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), Kaitlyn began to frame her project through the inquiry question of whether the differences in culture could put up more of a barrier than differences in language. From the literature, along with her brief internship experience, she looked to find deeper understanding of what successful EAL learning should look like and how it could be achieved; participatory approach seemed an appropriate strategy to conduct the project. She was able to explore these ideas through her meetings with the Korean mothers to learn how cultural barriers were affecting interactions with their children's teachers and school administrators. In reflection, Kaitlyn began to understand how important ownership of learning through relatable classroom content (provided with the participatory approach) is to supporting EAL learners. She was able to, through her photovoice project and comparison of lessons with the Korean mother's group, reflect on her brief experiences of what EAL supports looked like in her middle school internship, and recognized that they

were heavily language based without curricular consideration of cultural differences or personal interests.

The final assignment was a reflective project using photovoice as a tool, accompanied by a short reflective essay. TCs presented their reflection on their experiences and learning in the course using photographs and visual images of themselves and their voice in sound, print or other media to represent their growth in consciousness, belief systems, knowledge and practices over the course of the term. TCs chose the format for their own photovoice projects, ranging from YouTube videos, PowerPoint slides, to traditional scrapbooks. The next section presents a more detailed description of how the community project Kaitlyn's group conducted with the Korean women's group unfolded along with our reflection on the project.

The Project: A Participatory Approach to Engage EAL Parents



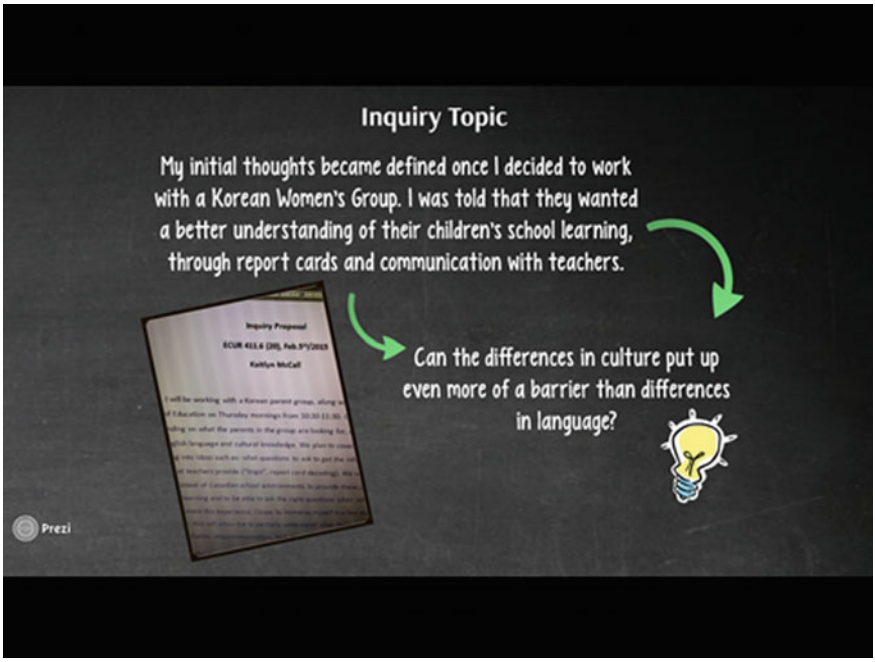
As represented in Kaitlyn's photovoice PowerPoint slide above, most of our pre-service teachers take education courses without much prior experience working with immigrant or EAL students. For example, one assignment Hyunjung does with TCs for another course of hers, which is about EAL across the curriculum, is to have TCs find and meet an EAL student (and his/her family if possible) for an informal conversation to learn about their background, schooling and language learning experiences. Almost every year, the majority of the TCs report that they do not know any school-aged EAL student or families in their personal network. Typically, the first time many TCs meet EAL students is during their initial placement in schools at the University or during their internship. One of the goals of the assignment is to engage in critical and reflective discussions in class and reflect on why that was the case, and what implications that might have for the lives of immigrant and EAL students and families in the city. As such, the deficit discourses on EAL students and their families which focuses on their lack of competency in language and culture, is still prevalent in educational contexts where EAL students are sometimes referred to speech pathologists without proper initial assessment of their language/literacy abilities both in their native language and in English. Kaitlyn also reported in her reflective writing that:

> I began this class with a very faint understanding of what my goals would be, of what I wanted to learn, and what I would gain from the course. I began my learning with some reading to gain a better general sense of what EAL is, what some practices for teaching it is, and why it is so important to approach EAL in a different way than learning disabilities or special education; they are two completely different areas and one issue I saw in my internship is that they were being treated the same.

Through the course readings, Kaitlyn also became interested in the importance of intercultural awareness or cultural competency to help her better support EAL students as she began her journey of teaching EAL:

> One article I found online really helped me to create my initial inquiry question, and although it isn't a scholarly article, the ideas presented really began my thinking on the importance of cultural awareness (Culturosity.com). It discusses the ways in which cultural assumptions and misinterpretations shape our daily interactions. This caused me to think about the ways that culture so deeply affects language learning and interactions, begging the question: can the differences in culture put up even more of a barrier than differences in language?

Kaitlyn thus chose to frame her EAL community learning experience with the development of English language classes for a group from the Korean-Canadian Women's Association in Saskatoon. Her interest in exploring the relation between cultural competency and language learning was further strengthened when she had an initial planning meeting with the Korean mothers.



The first meeting was to get to know one another, understand their expectations, interests and needs, and to confirm meeting schedules. While mostly university educated, the background of the Korean mothers varied in terms of their language proficiency, ranging from mothers who felt comfortable speaking and understanding English conversation, to those who needed translation from their peers and additional processing time to understand lessons and develop their own questions from the conversation. One of the mothers had lived in Canada only for one year at the time of the project, while some others had been in Canada for more than 10 years.

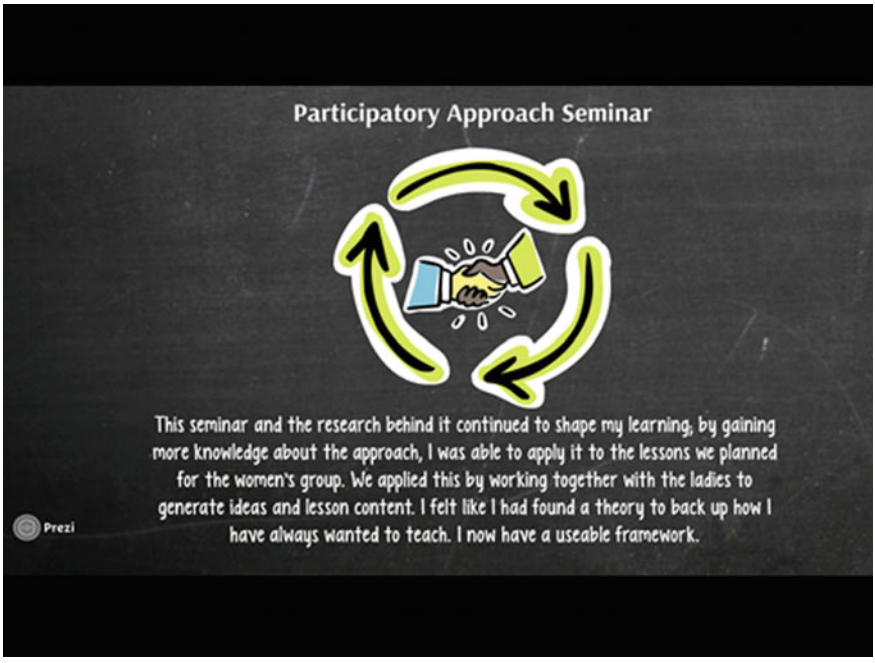
From the knowledge the EAL mothers brought to the meetings throughout the project, Kaitlyn learned that there is a big gap between school and parental understandings and expectations of their children's education, especially with EAL parents. The mothers had so many questions about their children's education that Kaitlyn had previously assumed would be common knowledge, or already shared from the school, such as how to choose which school their child should attend or which courses to take in high school. According to the mothers, one's choice of secondary education in Korea would directly influence whether she/he would be able to attend university (or not), and their future career paths. In this regard, there is much more flexibility in Canada; students from any high school, as long as they earn the right amount of credits and acceptable grades, have the ability to apply for and attend the post-secondary school of their choice.

Learning that some of the Korean mothers did not really know how to read their children's report card(s) and that they felt anxious when they had to communicate with their children's teachers in English, Kaitlyn and her partner decided to start

the class by exploring school environment and student/teacher interactions, which would lead into the following lessons on parent–teacher interview preparation. Her group met with the mothers for a weekly 60–90 min class for six weeks between February and March in 2015. In response to the needs of the Korean parents, each meeting was organized with 30–45 min of a structured lesson by TCs and a follow-up questions and discussion of the topic, and some informal conversation to improve general English speaking skills of the mothers. Hyunjung helped to secure a room at the university as a central meeting place for the weekly meetings and observed one session.

As Kaitlyn described in her reflective writing, it was not just the EAL mothers, but also the TCs who felt nervous about the initial meetings:

> I felt nervous to begin classes as this was a very new experience for me. … Our first meeting was awkward, but a great initial experience. We were able to go around the table (5 women from the association, myself, and my partner XX), and introduce ourselves and begin to build a working relationship with one another. This first meeting set the tone for the rest of the classes and we were able to begin our planning with the initial concerns that the ladies had presented us, surrounding their children's schooling, understanding report cards, and participating in parent-teacher interviews.

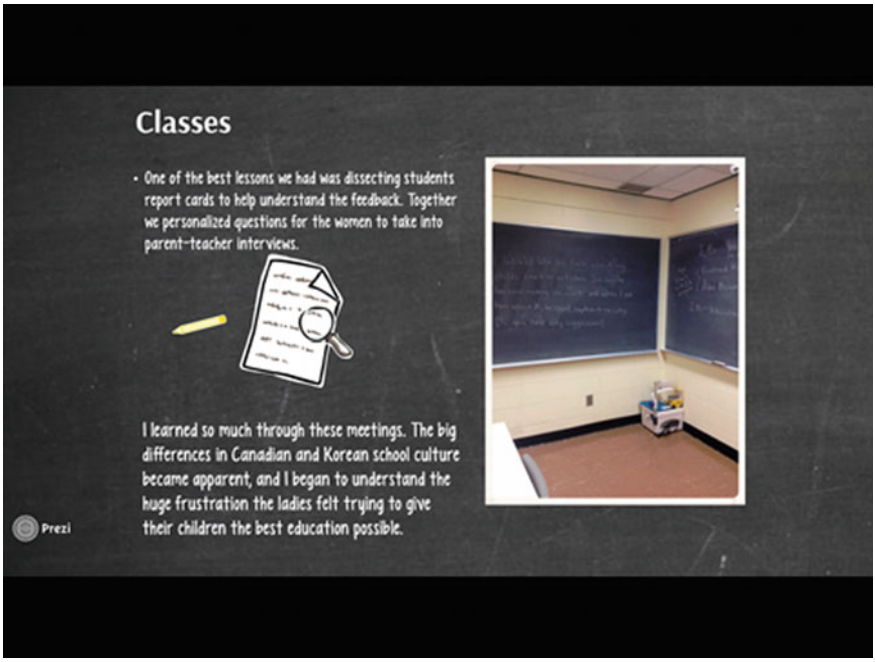


While working on the group seminar presentation with her inquiry group, Kaitlyn felt that a participatory approach would work well for the community engagement work she conducted with the Korean mothers. From the course reading on an example of participatory approaches in EAL education (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011),

she was able to see the practical implications of the approach and how it might be useful to work with the Korean mother's group to support both their English language development and cultural competency to improve their interaction skills with their children's teachers.

Kaitlyn found the biggest obstacle in applying the participatory approach with the group, was that they were not automatically inclined to participate and take the lead in the class. Following what is socially ingrained in many of today's students, they were ready to listen and record exactly what the teacher was going to say. Kaitlyn soon discovered that the style of teaching they grew up with in Korea seemed an even more traditional lecture style than what she was familiar with in Canada, making it more difficult for these mothers to take control of their learning within the class. It took the first few sessions for the group to feel able to start sharing and asking critical questions; creating a safe and comfortable environment, through the sharing of stories about family and personal experiences, significantly contributed to this change. Examples of pedagogical actions Kaitlyn and her group members took with the Korean mothers include creating meaningful vocabulary lists, speaking in terms that related to the mothers' needs and interests, and helping them to gain linguistic and cultural competence to become the advocates for their children and to use their voices to shape their learning. During the meetings, they discussed topics in English, but the Korean mothers were encouraged to cement their understanding by conferring in their native tongue whenever possible. The mothers brought the actual report cards that their children received to the meetings. The TCs helped them to record their concerns for parent–teacher interviews in their own words, and then the more experienced English speakers in the group helped to translate them back into English. The interaction Kaitlyn had with the Korean mothers during these meetings was an eye-opening experience and helped her to understand some of the challenges EAL families may encounter, and the different parental expectations that exist among families regarding children's schooling:

> By the second class, we were able to continue to get to know the ladies and we began to see some of the big school-based cultural differences between schooling in Canada and Korea. One of the ladies, whose daughter is in grade 5, expressed her concerns on choosing a high school and making sure that the correct classes would be chosen to allow her daughter to get into university. This was eye opening; for Canadian culture, grade five is just a part of elementary school; parents want their children to be doing well and learning of course but there are not usually concerns so far into the future (high school and university choices). Talking more in-depth with the ladies and doing some follow up research showed me how different these expectations are in Korea. The high school that you attend and how well you do leads directly to your placement in university. They also expressed the different work load expectations, and how they had spent many hours out of school studying (much more intense than the average Canadian students experience). This discussion helped to shape the rest of our lessons, and began to confirm my idea that the differences in culture are huge, perhaps even more than language barriers.



Along with her work with the Korean women's group, in order to further her exploration of the cultural side of her inquiry, Kaitlyn visited a couple different ethnic restaurants, a Chu Wah Chinese Grocery and Seafood (as an alternative grocery store), and a Chinese New Year celebration to see how she felt when surrounded by a different language and culture. At the first restaurant she tried, there was a strong English presence, but she was still unsure of what to order. She ended up choosing a Vietnamese pho soup, and she felt very awkward as she pronounced it wrong. She saw that others in the restaurant were using chopsticks to eat the contents of the soup, and then sipping the broth so she copied them, but she still was not sure if that was what she was supposed to be doing. Although she enjoyed the experience and the food, she definitely felt out of place. She had a similar experience in a Korean restaurant which she visited on the recommendation of a mother in the EAL group. In that restaurant, Kaitlyn tried kimchi, a representative Korean food, for the first time. She could relate it to sauerkraut, but it was more spicy. These two experiences allowed her, from the perspective of an outsider, the feeling of not knowing how to comfortably behave and interact in a more culturally specific environment. Thirdly, the experiences of a dragon dance for Chinese New Year were a great introduction into a different cultural celebration and she began to consider how families new to Canada would feel about major Canadian holidays such as Christmas, Halloween and Easter. As she explained in her reflective writing:

> These [cultural] experiences really added depth to my learning, and gave me information to bring back to my Korean women's group. Together, the two separate experiences [dining in ethnic restaurants and experiencing Chinese New Year celebrations] complemented each

other beautifully and one without the other would not have allowed me to learn so much about the nuances of culture and language from a mother and a student's perspective.

Kaitlyn's reflective writing and photovoice project also helped Hyunjung to better understand White Canadian TCs' knowledge base regarding Korean culture. For example, Kaitlyn's PowerPoint slide below includes the photograph of North Korean leader Kim Jeon-Eun, and a palace from an ancient dynasty, which most contemporary South Koreans, especially school-aged students, may not associate with (South) Korean culture. As for many Koreans, the Korean culture they mainly associate with includes K-pop, Koran dramas and Korean celebrities, and Korean fashion and make-up styles which are increasingly popular in China as a symbol of "chic". This sometimes irrelevant and often generalized knowledge of a culture starts teachers and EAL students off at a disadvantage when trying to create connections to curriculum that will be meaningful, and it clearly shows the disconnect that exists.

As such, a reflective project delineating a participatory pedagogical approach produced by TCs may be used to inform teacher educators of the range of needs and challenges in intercultural communications between White TCs and EAL and minority families as well as to raise TCs' awareness of their tacit assumptions and beliefs regarding linguistic and cultural diversity. This project serves as a first step in finding ways to teach pre-service teachers how to bridge that disconnect in their future practices, through relevant and project-based learning.

Given the rapid increase in cultural and linguistic diversity in schools across the globe, there is a strong need to re-orient pre-service teacher education programmes

around the goals of better serving the diverse needs of the students and their families. While research supports engaging parents in the school to foster student success (Guo, 2012; Pushor & The Parent Engagement Collaborative II, 2015), how schools are able to find practical ways to acknowledge the knowledge of immigrant and minority parents and allow them to have their voice and a place in teaching and learning remains a challenge. We conclude with suggestions for better supporting TCs to meaningfully engage immigrant and EAL parents.

Conclusion

> When parents and educators choose to enact the role of guest hosts on school landscapes, equity is generated where responsibility, authority, and knowledge are shared together and the guest host positions played by both create an interchange of teaching, learning, and care between them. (Khan, 2015, p. 178)

We have thus far provided an overview of the course project we conducted to better support EAL parents in our pre-service teacher education course using a participatory approach. We recognize the lack of parents' voice in this chapter. Hyunjung initially tried to write this chapter with one of the Korean mothers who participated in the project, along with Kaitlyn, but she ended up with withdrawing from the writing due to her multiple responsibilities as a working mother. We also acknowledge that our exploration was a small-scale, short-term intervention as one of the course projects. Nevertheless, we gained some important insights regarding how to better support pre-service teachers to engage EAL parents to better respond to the realities of cultural and linguistic diversity in today's classrooms.

First, critical pedagogical approaches to EAL teacher education, namely participatory approach in EAL, may provide a practical tool for TCs to recognize immigrant and minority parent knowledge and to engage them in a more meaningful way in schools. While the importance of parent partnership is widely emphasized in educational courses and literature, research has been scarce on how to actually accomplish this task, especially for EAL parents, moving beyond the traditional model of parent involvement such as multicultural potluck parties and volunteering. By adopting the participatory approach as a vital part of their interaction with the EAL parents, teachers may step back as a facilitator and give the minority parents a voice, so critical, meaningful learning may occur to improve linguistic and cultural competency for both the parents and the teachers. As Kaitlyn mentioned in her reflective writing:

> The most significant learning I gained through this experience was the discovery of the participatory approach and its connection to EAL and second language learning. … The way that education has been traditionally used can set up non-English speakers for failure. Individuals with strong accents and cultural knowledge gaps are often assumed to be less intelligent, or out of place. Teachers use content and strategies within their classroom without considering the cultural implications (for example, using a book about blizzards with students from Africa, and then assessing their comprehension as much lower than their peers without considering the knowledge gap there, or using the word bannister as a measure of vocabulary for a student who has never lived in a house with a staircase). I see the participatory approach

> as a way to engage students with their own experiences and goals to make their learning meaningful, and to create real change. The education system as a whole is set up in a way that teaches students facts and formulas, and ignores the importance of citizenship and learning to make change.

Furthermore, co-constructing knowledge with the minority parents through a participatory approach will be a useful way for teachers to identify the barriers that may hinder immigrant or EAL parents from interacting with teachers, to gain knowledge on different school systems and parental expectations of the children's education and language learning, and to facilitate EAL parents' overall engagement in schools. Mainstream teachers often feel frustrated with EAL and minority families' level of engagement when they do not seem invested, interested or involved in their children's schooling. One way to prevent such a misunderstanding by teachers of minority parent engagement would be the creation of a collaborative learning opportunity through a participatory approach for both the teachers and the parents and to recognize and draw on the language, culture and community resources EAL parents possess.

Second, we highlight the value and pedagogical potential of autobiographical class projects such as photovoice as a tool for reflection to foster a more inclusive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity among TCs for critical L2 teacher education. Recent L2 teacher education research has begun to examine the role of emotional, rather than just intellectual, engagement with teachers' autobiographical narratives of language experiences in facilitating critical examinations of ideological issues underlying L2 education and their perceptions over language and culture (Benesch, 2012; Busch et al., 2006; Lau, 2016; Motha & Lin, 2014). Facilitating a critical reflection on their attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity is particularly important for TCs who grew up in relatively homogeneous contexts such as Saskatoon. As Kaitlyn mentions, the biggest gap she found in her education was in how to engage with those parents with the language and cultural barriers. Nevertheless, mainstream teacher education mainly focuses on equipping TCs with the necessary skills and knowledge and seldom pays adequate attention to fostering affirming attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Developing effective, critical pedagogies for teacher education that help foster a more positive attitude towards bi/multilingualism and multiculturalism, a quality essential for linguistically and culturally responsive teaching, will contribute to EAL student success.

It is widely discussed that trustful relations between families and schools are essential for student engagement and learning as well as for a mutually beneficial, reciprocal partnership between parents and schools (Cummins, 2001; Guo, 2006, 2012; Haneda, 2010; Pushor & The Parent Engagement Collaborative II, 2015). To build such a reciprocal partnership to incorporate EAL families' funds of knowledge into the curriculum, EAL parents need to understand the expectations by the school for successful parental engagement. It is equally important to help teachers understand what immigrant and EAL parents expect of their children's education.

Autobiographical reflective projects such as Kaitlyn's photovoice helped Hyunjung as a teacher educator to better understand where potential misunderstandings might happen between White Canadian teachers and minority parents. In her first teaching year, Kaitlyn also observed the true differences in home life of her stu-

dents, along with the impact that parents have on their child's learning and learned that the link between teachers and parents has proven again and again to make huge differences in student engagement and success. As she notes, having a successful partnership with EAL parents will not only make EAL students more successful, but will give the teacher the ability to more easily engage and make critical learning connections with students. Finding the best practice in creating these connections is an ongoing challenge, but suggestions such as home visits, and open cultural days within classrooms and schools seem a good place to start. A large part of what Kaitlyn learned with her interactions with the Korean mothers was that they seemed either unsure or embarrassed to contact and speak openly with the schools their children attended, or that it was not their place and they were not welcome. Creating an environment in which EAL and minority families feel that their cultural knowledge is something to be valued and respected will give them the confidence to engage more fully in their children's learning. When teachers and TCs develop a more critical understanding of the knowledge and expectations of EAL parents, immigrant and minority parents may have an equal voice in important decision making in schools. We hope this chapter provides some insights regarding where we begin to make such a transformation happen.

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Chapter 16
University-School Partnerships: Professional Development of Teachers and School-Family Interactions in a Brazilian Context

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Abstract This chapter examines the potentialities and limitations of the adoption of a constructive-collaborative university-school partnership with a focus on strengthening the school-family relations, seeking to promote the professional development of teachers. It reports a set of three projects carried out by researchers from a Brazilian public university (Federal University of São Carlos) and teachers from public elementary schools situated in low-income communities in a medium-sized city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The research and intervention model adopted involved learning about the reality in which teachers work, identifying what they think about students and their families, understanding school-family interactions, and why teachers do what they do. The results are analyzed from the students' families and teachers' points of view about the school and school-family interactions; the observed teacher professional development processes and university-school collaboration aspects. Finally, specific recommendations regarding the university-school partnership are provided for future research.

Keywords School-family relations · University-school partnerships
Teachers' professional development · Collaboration

Introduction

This chapter examines the results of a set of three projects carried out by researchers from a Brazilian public university (Federal University of São Carlos) and teachers from public elementary schools situated in low-income communities in a medium-sized city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. A research and intervention methodology was used in an ongoing in-service continuous teacher education program aimed at

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strengthening school-family relations. Although each one of the three projects had specific objectives, a general research question guided all of them: Did the adoption of a constructive–collaborative model involving a university-school partnership, and based on strengthening school-family relations, promote the professional education of teachers; and if so, how? The goals of the projects were twofold: to generate knowledge about the professional development processes of teachers, and to collaboratively construct strategies to bring together schools and the families of their students in order to foster learning. The objectives of the three projects involved the following: 1. Understanding how schools and families perceive their mutual relationship and how this can be improved; 2. Discovering how families, especially those with underachieving children, perceive schools and the work carried on in them; 3. Analyzing how the professional development of teachers is affected by situations in which school-family relations are improving; and 4. Analyzing university-school partnerships.

In this chapter, we analyze concepts about school-family relations within a specific Brazilian context. Next, we present the adopted methodological orientation and the main results obtained. The final section focuses on what we believe are essential elements in promoting teachers' professional development and in the construction of collaborative strategies through a university-school partnership to bring together schools and their students' families in order to foster learning.

School-Family Interactions and Teachers' Professional Development Goals: Some Guiding Ideas

A growing body of literature on teachers' learning and professional development emphasizes the kind of knowledge teachers should have, as well as the way beliefs developed throughout a lifetime influence pedagogical practices. The research about teacher education points out that the central goal of professional development programs should be the construction and expansion of the teacher's knowledge base considering students' characteristics. Underlying these acts, we believe, is the teacher's knowledge base, which is constituted by a set of understandings—specific areas of learning, skills, and attitudes—all of which enter into and hopefully ensure effective action in specific learning and teaching situations, as well as in the decision-making process (Shulman, 1986, 1987).

When teachers teach, knowledge, beliefs, objectives, and hypotheses are fundamental elements in determining what is done and why it is done. Classroom practices are influenced by conceptions carried by each individual teacher regarding the subject matter taught, curricular content, the students, and learning. According to Louis (2010), school improvement depends on the implementation of new ideas about instruction, inter alia, and over the last decades, there has been an emphasis in the organizational learning. Although teaching can be typically considered an isolated activity, collaboration has been an alternative to change schools (Slater, 2010). The

idea to add, in a joint effort, institutions or people to seek ways to overcome the problems faced by teachers and students is not new and has been advocated in many instances, despite difficulties such as available time, resources, apparent lack of theoretical and transfer models.

Collaborative processes in teacher education can take many different shapes depending on the type of engagement established between the authorities and participants involved. The establishment of teachers communities has been widely investigated as an important tool for support for learning and professional development of teaching (Doppenberg, Brok, & Bakx, 2012; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). The literature points out that such communities have a substantial weight in the responsiveness of teachers to the demands arising from educational policies in their commitment to build adequate learning conditions for their students and consequently, in the changes evident in their teaching practices (Mizukami et al., 2010). It is noteworthy that a learning community differs from a mere group of people working toward a common goal. According to Gallucci (2003), communities of practice "create, expand and exchange knowledge about their practices, as well as develop their individual capacities" (p. 15). In professional collaboration processes, teachers can upgrade, expand, and deepen the content knowledge and pedagogical practices benefiting students (Chen, 2012).

Specifically with regard to the knowledge base for teaching, we assume that teachers should present interest in learning about the characteristics of both students and their communities; maintain high expectations with regard to their students; and establish bridges between the students' knowledge and the school curriculum, so that the classroom contains cultural elements relevant to all student groups. Beyond mastering the specific content, sociocultural knowledge, and using teaching strategies promoting active participation of the students are other important requirements. Above all, Zeichner (1992) emphasizes that teachers should consider classroom diversity as a resource rather than a problem. Like Gay (2013), we defend an equal educational opportunity that accepts differences among ethnic groups, individuals, and cultures as normative to the human condition and valuable to societal and personal development and the notion that instructional practices should be shaped by the sociocultural characteristics of the settings in which they occur, and by the populations for whom they are designed.

Data about school failure in Brazil make clear the importance of teachers' development of professional repertoires capable of responding to diverse realities and aiming at social inclusion of all their students. Teachers must be capable of adapting teaching strategies to students of varied cultural backgrounds, as well as to those stigmatized by a history of academic failure. Such a demand is complicated by Brazil's highly diverse population in social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic terms.

What we actually observe in the Brazilian context are, on one hand, concrete educational demands and, on the other, a growing distance between school education and that received at home. As a consequence, some parents perceive themselves as lacking time and competence to educate or even take care of their children, and they have readily transferred this task to better-qualified professionals. Ideally, however, parent-teacher relations—as a form of collaborative partnership—should represent

some cohesion between school programs and the educational values and goals held by the parents. But rarely does parent-teacher dialogue happen as if between equals, since parents customarily are deprived of the option of rejecting schooling. Considering that school-families' relations involves many different players (directors, coordinators, teachers, students, families of students and the community in which the school is situated), it is an enterprise that demands objective, planned and explicit arrangements. On the other hand, it also refers to subjective, silent, and unexpected actions that imply understanding, languages, concept that often demonstrate a disconnection between schools and their students' families. As a result of this kind of mismatch, it can be observed that some schools present ambiguous relations with their students' family.

In Brazil, there are sets of public educational policies in federal and other spheres that point to the need for schools to make quality connections with their students' families and communities. These policies include programs with focus on the integration of the students' families in the school contexts as the National Program for the Strengthening of School Boards (Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento dos Conselhos de Escola). This program aims to increase the participation of school and local communities in the administrative, financial, and educational management of public schools; to support school boards to promote the collective construction of an educational project at the school in line with the democratization process of our society; to monitor and promote evaluation culture within schools to guarantee the quality of education. In this case, the families can be actively involved in the decisions taken by their children's schools as they can participate on the school boards. The National Standards and the Teachers' Professional Standards as the Family Grant Program[1] are other important educational policies. In the same way as pointed out by Epstein (2011), in Brazil it can be noted some "confusion and disagreement about which practices of involvement are important and how to obtain high participation of all families" (p. 3). Broadly stated, researchers and policy analysts assume that parents, siblings, and extended families play an important role in education, but effectively they did not change teachers' interpretation of the role of the family on the children's schooling process.

Researchers in this study believe the importance of bringing schools and families together, as a way to diminish the "conflict zone" experienced by both schools and families. It is considered and respected their distinct characteristics and responsibilities, despite the fact that recent literature does not assert conclusively that families' practices influence the schooling process of Brazilian children and teenagers. It is important to point out that it is assumed that parent participation in the school should not take the place of the government's role in terms of accountability and financial nor in terms of its political responsibilities.

[1]The Family Grant Program is a direct transfer program income that benefits families in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. The Family Grant Program is part of the Brazil without Poverty Plan, whose activities focus on millions of Brazilians with per capita income less than US$ 30 monthly and is based on securing income, productive inclusion and access to public services.

Despite the evident complexity of the theme, we defend in our initiatives that all school-family interactions should be established based on each school's broader policies, social values, and its explicit recognition that valuing the parents' role is part of school education but cannot be a substitute for it. It is also important to take into account the characteristics that confer diverse task dimensions to the school, teachers, and students' families. We endorse, in the adopted perspective, that it is important to address the strengthening of school family interactions with the purpose of improving students' school success (Dessen & Polonia, 2007).

It should be recognized, however, that teachers, and therefore the school, are generally not prepared to develop positive perceptions and actions toward the families of their students (Epstein, 2011). As a consequence, their knowledge about the culture to which they belong, their family stories and values, their goals and the expectations regarding the role of the school are all partial and often permeated with misconceptions.

As in Deslandes (2009), it is considered that the following factors—a school principal with strong leadership skills and a solid relationship; stable and facilitating work conditions; time to share ideas for developing a common vision and mutual trust and clear roles of each party, among others—are essential in this kind of initiative and that the implementation work must be must be progressed gradually and become a part of the everyday life of the involved actors until it is finally adopted.

Another assumption by these researchers is that schools must be responsible for the first steps toward the improvement of the school-family relationship, taking into account its educational characteristics and nature. No interaction with the goal of joining schools and their students' families and communities should inhibit the families' individual and collective voice (Carvalho, 2004).

The Research and Methodological Framework

In the three projects, we have adopted a constructive–collaborative model of investigation based on action research. It was considered that in-service teacher education programs should be adapted to specific schools, that the structure and content of these professional development programs should be determined by the school teachers themselves, and that, preferably, the training should occur at the workplace. This is important to take into account the local characteristics—the multifaceted community of each school—in such a manner that teachers are able to gain a better understanding of their students and the students' families. In this sense, research and the intervention model adopted demand learning about the reality in which teachers work, identifying what they think about students and their families, understanding school-family interactions, and why teachers do what they do. Based on such information, researchers and teachers can reflect collaboratively and, if necessary, construct strategies to deal with real situations, taking into consideration both school and community characteristics. This model makes various assumptions, including that learning to teach and becoming a teacher are processes based on multiple expe-

riences and knowledge modes (Mizukami et al., 2010). These processes begin prior to formal teacher education and continue throughout the training period and, subsequently, develop throughout all the experience comprising a teacher's professional practice. This learning involves, among other elements, affective, cognitive, ethical, and performance factors (Cole & Knowles, 1993) in a process understood to be developmental and demands time and resources for teachers to modify their practices. Going beyond the learning of new techniques, changes in teachers imply conceptual revisions of their individual educational and instructional processes, including the theoretical framework of teaching in itself. This is important as teaching is a dynamic sequence of actions on the teachers' part, responsive to what happens in the classroom and in the interactions with students, and it is related to and takes place in an institutional context. Collaboration between university-school; researchers-teachers; teachers'-students' families are conceived as a dialogical process focused on the comprehension of each one acting context, roles, and responsibilities. In this way, collaboration is a long-time enterprise that must respect local knowledge, opinion, and diverse practices. Teachers and researchers involved in this exchange can perceive the university-school interaction as a contribution to their professional development in a multifaceted and not overwhelmingly hierarchical way. Collaboration is conducive to mutual understanding and consensus, democratic decision-making, and common action (Clark et al., 1996; Clark, Herter, & Moss, 1998; Doppenberg et al., 2012). It implies a tendency toward inquiry, the fruit of which is the generation of new knowledge as a result of addressing daily concerns and problems experienced by teachers in the classroom and in the school.

One characteristic of the studies is that they produced a story about events as they occur in their natural settings, such as teachers' meetings, family interviews, observed school-family interactions, and program events. A second hallmark of the program was the effort made by the researchers to build a good rapport with the school teachers and the students' families. A third hallmark was the researchers' commitment to creating a safe and open research environment where the voices, opinions, and views of the different participants could emerge. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observation in all three studies. Interviews were semi-structured and followed a protocol developed to elicit information about specific themes related to each one of the studies. It is important to note that all the participants were encouraged to discuss or explore other related issues not directly associated with the interview protocol. The university researchers interviewed teacher. The interviews took place in school. Parent and family interviews (81, considering two of the studies described in this chapter) were often conducted by education graduate students and were held at the school or the students' home, after parents received a letter explaining the study.

Visiting the student's home was a valuable intervention and research tool as it provided an opportunity to deepen the researchers' knowledge about their living habits. It was observed that the parents were visibly proud of receiving our visit. In all cases, interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The families' interview at school or their homes focused on the educational value of the school, the importance they attributed to what their children were learning, their patterns of

contact with the school and teachers, and their expectations regarding school-family relations. Interviews conducted at their homes were also an opportunity to document some important aspects about the families' relations with their children's educational process and school. The information provided by the families was shared with the teachers in meetings conducted by the researchers.

The field observations were a way to learn through exposure to or involvement in the school routine and to follow teachers' contact with the students' families and their working practices. In the schools, the researchers paid attention to the aspects that were relevant to understand the context variables and the interaction maintained by the school and their students' families in both the places where teachers usually talk with the parents and the teachers' work sites. The questionnaires were suggested by the teachers at the teachers—researchers meetings and the questions focused on the parents' conceptions about school; school learning processes; the importance of what is taught in school; and their interest in participating in school activities.

It is important to note that each project began with the school's request to the university, followed by meetings between the researchers and teachers to establish a common work agenda. The work always began by eliciting, usually through interviews conducted by the researchers, the teachers' conceptions about their students, students' families, school-family interactions, and ways to improve these relationships. This preliminary phase guided the subsequent ones oriented to obtain information about the students' families and also the proposition of activities related to the promotion, the modification, and strengthening of school interaction with their students' families. The events aimed at bringing the school and families together and were collaboratively organized by the researchers and teachers. More specifically, the researchers were at the same time active participants and observers of the different steps in the development of the projects.

During the research development, we usually had fortnightly meetings with the school teachers, lasting about one and a half hour each. Although teacher participation in this kind of activity was voluntary, it was usually valued and encouraged by the school principal. In the three projects, the intervention research lasted approximately one and a half year each. In all cases, it was promoted as a special event with the teachers and students' families that offered important data about the school-family relationship.

Most of the teachers with whom we worked may be considered experienced professionals since they had been teaching for more than five years. In general, they had higher teacher education majors. Because they worked at public schools, they were all subject to precarious work situations: heavy teaching workload; large classes; little institutional time to prepare classes and to study; low salaries; and the need of complementing their monthly income with other activities, not always related to teaching. For example, in the third study, many teachers worked in more than one school and had contact with almost 500 students each week.

The analysis below draws on data from three studies which focused on working with in-service teacher education and examined school-family relationships. The first project was conducted with the objective of learning what responsibility schools have toward families of children with past school failures and those in Accelerated

(remedial) programs. It involved two teachers of Acceleration Classes and their students' families (50). The children had a grade-age discrepancy and unsuccessful school stories, often with a past of frequent change of schools—due to belonging to migrant families—and sequential retentions (some had attended the same grade more than three times). Interviews were conducted with 18 families in their homes to learn their conceptions about the function of the school, about school failure, and why they kept their children at school. The project also involved the establishment of educational activities for the teachers, students, and families in order to bring these players together.

The second project had the objective to help a preschool know their students' families better and to strengthen their school-family interactions. This project had an objective to respond to families' interest in knowing more about what their children learn at school. It involved 27 teachers of a K-6 school that also had specific programs for 7–14-year-old students during the day and for 10–14-year-old students in the evenings (6 p.m.–10 p.m.), with a total of 650 students. The project involved the mapping of the teachers' and the families' conceptions about school-family interaction, the function of the school considering the service it provided, the alternatives to improve these relations, and how the parties perceived each other. In this case, 63 families and 27 teachers were interviewed about these topics. A folder was organized by the teachers in several meetings organized and conducted by the researchers about the theme "*Discipline or How to Establish Behavioral Limits.*" It is important to note that the students' families suggested the folder theme. The folder content was discussed with the students' parents and relatives at an event aimed at bringing the school community together.

The third project was carried out at an elementary school, from six through ninth grade that also offered programs for adults in the evening. In this case, after asking the families what they wanted to dialogue about with the school (through the examination of 550 questionnaires corresponding to 30% of the students), the school decided to work with the theme "*The importance of what is learned at school,*" and an event was set up to this end. Forty-six teachers, grouped according to the curricular content they taught, defined what the parents should know about the theme. The teachers' opinions were gained through questionnaires and observation of meetings between the teachers and the researchers. In this study, the researchers helped the school teachers design, apply, and analyze a questionnaire directed to their students' parents with the objective of defining what parents considered important to talk over with school professionals and the best way to accomplish such communication.

Results

With the use of a collaborative and constructive model of research and intervention, the different projects can be centered on the analysis of the professional development of teachers as well as on the university-school partnerships. The results presented

below were organized considering different points of view about the school-family partnerships and the observed professional development process.

An Overview of Families' and Teachers' Points of View About the School and School-Family Interactions

In all three studies, we noted that parents expressed great interest in the school and its educational processes (more than 70%), even those in lower-income classes or having poor educational levels, or with children with a history of past school failure. They usually answered the school's invitation to participate in the planned activities. In the second study, for example, 200 families approximately (from the total 650 students) participated in the meetings promoted by the school. Parents reported that they only came to the school when they were explicitly invited to do so, since they did not see themselves as participating members of the school community (88% in the first case; 73% in the second).

Usually, parents were contacted by teachers at the school gate or in a corridor and were forced to hear about their children's problems without any kind of privacy. Generally, the teachers' complaints or issues on these occasions referred to their children's behavior, seen as inadequate, or their insufficient academic performance, and the school expectation was that families could solve or improve those conditions. Almost all the parents and relatives in the studies indicated that the school and the teachers often adopted a communication form they did not fully understand. For example, written reports were sent to illiterate families, which required the help of other people and of the student himself/herself for interpretation.

Some families indicated that they looked for ways to help with their children's homework and other academic activities. For instance, they used creative ways to promote reading or mathematics, many of them not considered by the school, such as the use of advertisement flyers as instructional material. When parents (third study) were questioned about topics they chose to discuss with their children's teachers, almost 40% chose to talk about what was taught at the school instead, including different subject content. We think that this option denotes parental interest in their children's schooling process. In distinct situations, the parents demonstrated interest and a desire to better understand the pedagogical work carried out by the school and to take an active part in several school activities.

Most (80%) of the teachers participating in the three school communities indicated their belief that the students' families were not interested in their children's schooling process and that parents stayed apart from the education carried out by the school or even confronted it. The teachers apparently underestimated the parents' investment in educational issues, particularly their ability to understand what was taught at school.

We noted that some teachers' opinions about the families were biased and based on beliefs possibly established when they began teaching at the school, about 20 years ago (second study). Our data suggest that other teachers show stereotyped opinions

about families, seemingly related to the former characteristics of the communities where the students live, that is, neighborhoods with poor, lower per capita income, little schooling, and many migrants and unemployed people. Many teachers were prone to attribute negative characteristics to most of their students' families, even though these characteristics were actually present in just a very small group of them. This certainly influenced school-family interactions, despite the fact that the neighborhood and the school community have recently experienced changing characteristics.

We observed that there were teachers' shared beliefs at the schools that had been established from individual beliefs and from those more directly related to the school history and the economic and cultural contexts of the community. Our data were restricted to schools in lower-income neighborhoods, and so do not allow any generalization to be made.

Some teachers indicated that the students' parents are conceived as incapable of fully understanding what is taught at school (37%), and not all school knowledge is considered to be relevant to this population (13%) (third study). We observed that in this case the way the meeting between teachers and the students' families was devised and managed reiterates these conceptions: The parents were submitted to the teachers' perceptions in regard to what they thought the students should learn at school. Apparently, the teachers expected the parents' *passive acceptance* of the school's teaching and their active support of the school's actions.

Considering the data obtained in these projects, we noted, as Castro and Regattieri (2009), that in the three studies:

1. the teachers' conceptions about the students and their families do not necessarily correspond to their real characteristics;
2. the school-family interactions were tenuous and not always favoring reciprocal understanding;
3. the school did not provide adequate opportunities to help the teachers (re)construct their professional knowledge base and eventually change their opinion about their students and their families;
4. most teachers do not clearly recognize the importance of establishing interactions with their students' families in order to be able to learn who they are, what they expect from the school, and how they can be encouraged to actively participate in their children's schooling process.
5. however, in all three studies we noted the enthusiasm of the teachers when they noticed the parents were participating in an active way and responding to the "new" school demands, including the interviews, the questionnaires, and the events.

Teacher Professional Development Processes: Some Notes About the University-School Collaboration

As the projects developed, we began to consider the meetings and events as unique moments to collectively (researchers, school teachers, and families) elicit conceptions and to analyze and eventually change the participants' ideas. Apparently, these changes and the time they demanded were not the same for all participants. The reason for these differences is not clear. We noticed that the meetings and events were enriching moments for establishing dialogue, sharing knowledge, getting in contact with new and unexplored ideas, and getting to know one's peers and their conceptions. We suppose that these differences are due to various personal dispositions toward change and other personal characteristics. For instance, we observed a greater involvement of those teachers that had already experienced situations, not necessarily school-related, in which collaboration was a key factor in achieving the desired results.

Nevertheless, we also observed in these processes some resistance on the part of some teachers in getting engaged in the construction of the interventions with the families. Their behavior led the university researchers to believe that they expected us to formulate the proposals, despite their awareness before joining the program how the work would be carried out. Intriguingly, this situation seems to be paradoxical, due to teachers' criticism against public educational policies that, in their opinion, do not usually empower them and do not actually provide the means for their effective implementation. It seemed that the commitment assumed collectively by the school and the other teachers was not their own. However, we must not dismiss the poor working conditions for many of them and the barrier this presents for them.

We consider that because implementation processes may suffer distinct influences—from the school administration, from peers, from lack of acceptance by the group, from not wanting to be explicitly different—which interfere with the development of the work, it may result in different levels of commitment. It is also important to point out that possibly some teachers were expecting a different model of a university-school relationship, in which the norm is to prescribe their actions in place of a collective construction. They expected, probably, the same kind of relationship they were used to having.

Some difficulties were observed related to school organization and the meetings between the teachers and researchers. In general, some of the teachers' weekly schedule included time to meet with researchers. However, urgent demands by the school administration and pedagogical coordination often used up the time set apart to discuss issues related to project development. This aspect made it difficult to follow the planned schedule. A further obstacle was that some teachers had other professional duties, such as teaching at other schools, which restrained their full participation in the project in spite of the fact that they were being paid for it, evidenced in the case of the K-6 school.

In the three situations analyzed, the researchers observed a broad parental adherence to the initiatives carried out by the school, evidenced by their large presence

and participation in the proposed activities. We noticed, in these circumstances, a lot of enthusiasm by the teachers to carry on, improve, or expand these initiatives. However, aspects related to the discontinuity of some local educational policies, the implementation of new school objectives, as well as the annual relocation of teachers and principal around the local schools implied starting academic activities almost from scratch. These school organizational characteristics limit long-term experiences such as the ones we are discussing.

From the beginning, we supposed that the continuity of the approximation program could be facilitated by the longer presence of the university researchers at the school. Nevertheless, some non-controlled variables intervened to prevent this possibility in spite of our wishes. It seems that the teachers' enthusiasm did not survive the urgencies at school, and they were unable to be involved in longer duration projects which demand a high personal involvement and hold few possibilities of meeting the expectations of all the participant teachers. Finally, we could not conduct follow-up studies to evaluate the lasting effects of the different experiences in the school as an organization and in the teachers individually. Thus, little can be said about the real changes that occurred in the culture of school-family interactions.

Final Considerations

Several points emerge from the data presented here. We assumed that the school teachers' knowledge about the students and their families, when elicited and confronted with that of their colleagues, would foster the search for strategies aimed at strengthening school-family interactions. The ideal school-family interaction should consist of a type of bilateral communication, appropriately initiated by the school. Not only should it address school problems, but also the way of life of children and teenagers, considering who they are, what they like, etcetera (Dessen & Polonia, 2007). We assert that the initial, formative teacher education programs must develop this issue of the teacher's professional relationship with varied members of the school community.

The absence of an adequate school space and information may give the families the impression that their opinions and knowledge are undesirable and without value to the school professionals, which keeps families away or makes them feel uncomfortable at their own children's school (Jasis, 2000). Through a process of *silent agreement*, the families, even against their own will (Miceli, 2000), can endorse the teachers' perception/belief that they are uninterested and incompetent regarding their children's school education.

Considering the diversity of contexts and characteristics, it may not be reasonable to establish fixed rules for school-family communication, nor to propose a sole interaction model or even define a single parental role pattern concerning school matters. School-family relations, given their complexity, should be dealt with taking specific contexts into consideration. Schools are not all alike—despite being ruled by the same laws and regulations and having common objectives—and family envi-

ronments are quite distinctive, in spite of their apparent resemblance. In view of the points raised by Deslande (2009), it is understood that such processes also require time and availability of the involved school players.

These differences, which make every family and school idiosyncratic units, should be respected; thus, school-family interactions should be recognized as distinctive. When their unique situations are taken into account, it is possible to rise above their peculiarities to reach a common goal, which is, in principle, that of improving the quality of students' learning.

It is possible that some teachers' reluctance to participate actively in the proposed activities is related to some teacher education and performance policies predominating in Brazil that do not consider, in general, the importance of their participation both in devising and implementing these policies. This may be attributed to the policymakers' drive to solve problems in the short run without any effective involvement in the search for long-term solutions.

It should be noted that Brazilian public policies ought to work urgently in improving teachers' general working conditions and the functional and organizational characteristics of the schools in order to reduce the obstacles observed for teachers. This would help teachers share their experiences and construct a communal knowledge base. Moreover, these conditions would enhance the potential for better developed university-school partnerships. Conceptual changes do not take place easily and in a unique pattern. They demand the establishment of a reciprocal base of trust between the different partners, in this case, school teachers and university researchers. The present context does not always allow researchers to do elaborate planning beforehand, further inhibiting the work and the results.

The adoption of a constructive–collaborative model as an intervention strategy does more than just expose the teachers to the knowledge base of the university. It helps them to actively participate in the construction processes of this knowledge and to implement viable alternatives to overcome the problems they face, for example, strategies to strengthen school-family relations. Thus, this model may not be characterized as the usual intervention tool, but as an investigative one. It emphasizes the epistemological importance of the varied knowledge constructed by the participants.

Another advantage of this model is that it makes possible a better understanding of teachers' learning processes in their workplace which, in turn, positively affects the basic teacher education programs of the researchers. It is then possible to understand the subtleties of teachers' professional learning processes and various aspects related to the different teaching and learning contexts that would not be otherwise evidenced. It also facilitates exploration of the process of making teacher knowledge more explicit, disseminated, criticized, codified, and developed. We indicate below some factors that should not be neglected when one adopts the point of view of this research and investigation methodology in order to achieve the desired goals:

(a) The school should be considered as a locus for the professional development of teachers and for the construction of new knowledge about individual and collective processes.

(b) The application context should include the teachers' actual working conditions as well as the school's organizational conditions.
(c) The partnership work (university-school) should originate from a real school necessity despite the fact that the first contact may come from the university.
(d) The specific knowledge and experiences of each group of participants should be taken into account and should be shared by all.
(e) The researchers have to be willing to consider the school's culture, to adopt a flexible frame of mind, and to reconstruct their projects whenever necessary.
(f) A larger number of participants from the partner school provides better chances of success.
(g) The school has to allocate enough time for teachers to be engaged in the work, especially for the meetings between the teachers and the researchers.
(h) The pedagogical coordination and administration committee should not only take part in the process but lead it.
(i) It is necessary to accommodate the school community's expectations for the research and for intervention actions.
(j) The trust established between all parties is important and takes time to be established.

Finally, we suggest that the school can no longer be merely conceived as a social agency detached from its community and other socializing agencies, such as students' families. Schools must contemplate working with different partners (including universities) in order to be successful, realizing that such partnerships do not neglect or minimize the school's function but help them respond to the demands that challenge schools today.

Nevertheless, some questions remain unanswered that demand new explorations. Some potential areas for further research include: how to guarantee accurate teachers' knowledge about their students' families (considering that this is always a partial and not a final understanding, and considering their poor beginning teacher education, their inadequate working conditions, and the uniqueness of school cultures); how to educate teachers to deal with diversity; how to overcome the resistance and bias constructed throughout different trajectories (do they belong to a given community or to a particular teacher?); how to deal with the teacher's personal right to show reluctance; how to deal with situations of collective responsibility in which the participants assume different degrees of responsibility and involvement; and how to sensitize those in charge of conceiving and implementing the public policies that can meet the formative and professional needs of teachers and schools. All of these questions require further investigation to best prepare teachers to partner with students' families and to enhance students' learning.

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